THE ENCHANTED SE GARDEN Alexander R. Gordon



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THE ENCHANTED GARDEN ALEXANDER R. GORDON, D D.



THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

STORIES FROM GENESIS RETOLD FOR YOUNG FOLK

BY

ALEXANDER R. GORDON, D.D.

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TO MARGARET AND JANETTE



PREFACE

There is no book in the Bible more fascinating than Genesis. It charms us in our childhood, and it holds its spell to the end. For it is not only full of the enchanted poetry of the East; it is a shining mirror of life in every age and under every sky. As we follow these ancient tales, we seem to be reading the story of our own souls.

This book has been written for young folk beginning to look out on the wonder of life. But I trust it will appeal also to older readers who still retain the dew of their youth, especially to parents and teachers who seek to win their children to the

love of beauty and goodness. May this re-telling

of Genesis help them in their heavenly task!



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THE ENCHANTED GARDEN



THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

Ι

THE TREES IN THE GARDEN

INJE all love a garden. Some of us have gardens of our own, and we know the joy of tending them. In the bright spring months we sow the tiny seeds; we watch them break through the ground, and unfold their stems and leaves to the sunshine; we water the young plants, and keep them clear of weeds, until the whole garden is a mass of glowing colour. Even those who live in the city have some share of this joy. We have our public parks and playgrounds. Perhaps also we have a patch of soil where we grow a few favourite flowers. And when the hot summer comes, we leave our dusty streets behind us, and wander through garden and orchard, weaving sweet bouquets of daisy and lily and rose, plucking the ripe berries from the bush, or gathering our baskets full of golden orange and red-cheeked apple. And we feel that life in a garden is life indeed.

It makes us glad to know that God also loves

a garden. When He created this world, He planted a garden in Eden, "the land of Delight," on the rich plain of Mesopotamia. This garden He laid out with every kind of tree that is pleasant to the eyes and good for food, trees on whose branches the birds sang with joy, and round whose stems the beasts of the field roamed in blissful freedom. The grassy slopes of the garden He decked with flowers, and He brought a river from Eden to water it. Here He placed the man and the woman whom He had formed, "to dress it and to keep it." And He used to come down in the cool of the evening, to enjoy with them the beauty of the garden, and to walk and talk with them, as a father talks with his children.

This is no mere tale of far-off days. It is a true parable of life. God's garden is the soul, in which He has sown the seeds of all lovely flowers and trees. And He has made us His gardeners, that we may watch over the seeds, and help them to blossom and bear fruit. The flowers of the soul are just those gracious habits which St. Paul has written about: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, temperance." And the trees are the manlier virtues which boys admire so greatly: virtues like courage, strength, endurance, truthfulness, loyalty to comrades, willingness to help others in time of need. If the garden of our soul be filled with such flowers and trees, God will delight to come down and walk in it, to call us His friends, and to talk with us as freely as He did with Adam and Eve.

It was God's wish that His children should pass

all their days in the innocent enjoyment of Eden. So He placed in the midst of the garden "the tree of life," that they might eat of the fruit of it, and live for ever. But if they were to be worthy of immortal life, they must be tried and proved. So beside the tree of life He placed "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," warning them not to eat of it, for on the day they ate they would surely die.

I think we all know the meaning of this tree. In the garden of the soul there are the good fruits of love and peace, gentleness, courage, strength and truthfulness; but there are also the evil fruits of hatred, malice and strife, ill-temper, cowardice and falsehood. And as the good fruits are wholesome for the soul, the evil fruits are poisons which kill the soul. Thus God bids us "abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good." And we cannot make our choice too early in life. For the voice of heavenly Wisdom says, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."

П

THE SERPENT AND THE CHERUBIM

IN the wonderland of Eden man lived in friend-I ship with the beasts as well as God. Only the serpent hated him, and planned to do him harm. So, finding Eve one day alone near the forbidden tree, he began to talk with her. "Hath God really said. Ye shall not eat of any of the trees of the garden?" In simple innocence Eve answered. "Of every tree of the garden we may freely eat, save of the tree which stands in the midst of the garden, of which God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, nor even touch it, lest ye die." But the serpent was not to be put off by innocent words. Fastening his eye on the woman, he hinted that God did not mean what He said. God was jealous of His children, and only wished to keep them ignorant of life. "Ye shall certainly not die. The truth is, God knoweth that on the day ye eat of the fruit of the tree your eyes will be opened, and ve shall become as God Himself, knowing both good and evil." And poor Eve was caught by his flattering speech. She looked at the tree, and saw that its fruit was pleasant to the eye and sweet to the taste; she thought also how delightful it must be to know good and evil. So she plucked an apple from the tree and ate it; then she went to her husband, gave him some of the fruit, and he also ate. Thus our first parents disobeyed the word of the Lord.

We can all guess what the serpent was. Temptation! Sleek and subtle as a serpent, it winds its way into the heart, and tries to catch us by honeyed words. It tell us how sweet the forbidden fruit is, how fine a thing it is to know good and evil, how mean God is to prevent our enjoyment. And far too readily we yield to the spell. We eat of the tree of knowledge, find the taste of it pleasant, and soon begin to share the

fruit with our companions. Ay, but how cruel is the serpent! Those glittering eyes are shot with fiery hatred against us. That tongue which speaks so smoothly has a sting whose poison is death. And quickly the poison begins to work. Adam and Eve had no sooner tasted the fruit of the tree than they were ashamed and afraid. When they heard the sound of God's footsteps in the garden, they ran to hide themselves among the trees. And when God questioned them about their guilt, they threw the blame on one another. Adam said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." And Eve said, "The serpent tempted me, and I did eat."

How true it all is! The moment we do wrong, we become uneasy and alarmed. We can no longer look our parents and friends in the face. We try to keep away from God. We are afraid even to think of Him. And we blame others for our faults. We say our companions led us astray, or the tempter caught us before we knew, or God Himself threw the stumbling-block in our path!

But it is useless to hide our sins from God. His eyes can search the very thoughts of our heart. And He is not mocked, "for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." God did not, indeed, slay Adam and his wife. He gave them many more years to enjoy the sunshine. And to shelter them from the rough blasts of the world, He made them coats of skin to cover them. But He drove them out of the garden, to toil with the sweat of their brow on the hard thorny soil of the desert. And at the entrance to the garden He placed two winged cherubim, with a flaming sword that turned in every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life.

I think we can guess what this also means. The cherubim are the angels who protect God's presence against evil. And the flaming sword is conscience. Once we have sinned, this sword of conscience prevents us from ever returning to the garden of innocence. But if there be no way back to innocence, there is a way forward to victory. We read that, when God sent Adam and Eve out of Eden, He held out to them the hope that their children would crush the head of the serpent, though the serpent would still strike at their heels. That is, they would conquer sin, though the victory would be gained through much suffering and sorrow. And in this fight with sin, He would Himself help them to conquer.

We have a far brighter hope than they had. Jesus Christ has come to our world. He, too, was tempted, "in all points like as we are," but without sin. The suggestions of the serpent He flung one after another behind Him; and on the Cross

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He trampled him under His feet, though the serpent stung Him to the heart. By His death He brought us deliverance from sin. Thus He opens the way once more to the tree of life, not that which stood in the Eden that was lost, but that which stands for ever in the Eden above the skies. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

Ш

THE CROUCHER AT THE DOOR

THE lot of Adam and his wife outside of Eden I was a toilsome one. But love lightened the load. And soon children came to add sunshine to their love. Eve's eldest son she called Cain, which means Gotten, for she said, "I have gotten a boy from the Lord." The second she called Abel, which means Shepherd, for she hoped he would help his father with the sheep. As they grew up. Cain became a tiller of the ground, while Abel kept the flocks. How Adam must have rejoiced to see his two sons thus shouldering their end of the burden! But he longed still more to see them grow together in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Thus often he would tell them of the happy time when he and their mother had walked so intimately with God in the garden. And often he would gather them round the family altar when he offered his sacrifices of thanksgiving to God for His goodness to all of them in the fields and in the home. Ere long Cain and Abel began to offer sacrifices for themselves. But the spirit in which they offered them was different. offered his sacrifice with a frank, glad heart, because he loved God, and was grateful for His mercies. But Cain offered his with a grudge, as though it were a tax God forced him to pay

against his will. And as God loves only the cheerful giver, He had respect unto Abel and his offering, while unto Cain and his offering He had no respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his face fell. His heart was bitter against the brother whom God had favoured. He blamed him for the respect of persons God had shown. And as he brooded over it, the fire burned hot and fierce, and he moved about the camp with dark and sullen looks, consumed by a passion of hatred towards the innocent.

Cain doubtless imagined he was doing no wrong in harbouring such feelings against his brother. He may even have persuaded himself that he was in the right. But God unveiled the sin that lurked beneath his anger. "Why art thou wroth? And why is thy face fallen? If thou doest well, shouldest thou not hold it up, like a man of honour? But if thou doest not well, sin croucheth at the door; and unto thee is its desire, while thou shouldest rule over it."

We have here a wonderfully vivid picture of temptation and its stealthy approach. In the garden of Eden it had appeared as a serpent, the subtlest and most venomous of reptiles. Now it takes the shape of a tiger, beautiful in outward appearance, lithe and graceful in all its movements, but crafty and cruel as it is beautiful, not stalking like the lion in lordly majesty, but lying in ambush, or gliding softly through the jungle, then crouching at the house door, ready to leap upon its unwary victim, and tear him in savage fury.

How true this picture also is! Like Cain, we

often imagine we can indulge in bitter feelings, and yet be guilty of no sin. But once we allow our hearts to be haunted by evil passions, sin crouches at the door, waiting for a chance to spring in and overpower us. Sin lay at the door of Cain's heart; and as soon as the door was opened, when he and Abel were alone in the field, the sin rose and mastered him, and he slew his brother. With us, too, a sinful thought is the first step to a sinful deed. While the spell of evil is still upon us, the temptation comes, and we fall almost before we realise our danger. Like a wild beast sin holds us in its clutches, and we are lost.

But there is another side to the picture. "Unto thee is its desire, while thou shouldest rule over

it." As Browning says,

"Why comes temptation but for man to meet And master and make crouch beneath his foot, And so be pedestalled in triumph?"

Man has little strength to cope with a wild beast suddenly springing from its lair. But in the open field he is master of the strongest. The very look of his eye is enough to make the king of the forest quail before him. And with his weapons he can bring down the fiercest of his foes. So also, hopeless as it seems for us to struggle against the sin that crouches at the door, we are more than a match for the temptations that meet us on the highways of duty and honour. There are those that shrink before a fearless look. Stand up to your temptations, and often they will leave you without a blow. And though sometimes you must fight, as Christian fought with Apollyon, cour-

age and faith will make you "more than con-

But even if we have allowed our temptations to crouch at the door, we can yet find strength to overcome. He who warned Cain of the presence of the tempter would have helped him to the mastery, had he only given heed to the warning. And He is still ready to help all who seek His help. Sin may crouch at the door. But Jesus stands at the door and knocks. And if any man hear His voice and open the door, He will come in and abide with Him. Before the glance of His pure eve the sin that desires to bring us down will flee away abashed. Or if it still dare to attack us, in Jesus' strength we shall make it crouch beneath our foot, "and so be pedestalled in triumph." For temptation has a real place in God's great plan of life. It is the athletics of Christian character. Without temptation we should be poor, weak creatures, unable to play our part with vigour and success. But through facing and mastering our temptations, we become good soldiers of Jesus Christ. And on the day of the Grand Review we shall receive the crown which He has promised to all who have fought and won.

[&]quot;To him that o'ercometh God giveth a crown;
Through faith we shall conquer, though often cast
down;

He who is our Saviour our strength will renew; Look ever to Jesus—He will carry you through."

IV

WALKING WITH GOD

In the East one who slays his fellow is banished to the wilderness, and there left to the vengeance of the dead man's family and friends. His only hope of safety is to flee to another tribe, to receive their mark, and to pass under their protection. When Cain became a fugitive and wanderer in the earth, he had no one to turn to. But God took pity upon him, and set His mark on his forehead, that no one finding him should slay him.

Thus He seasoned justice with mercy.

Once launched out for themselves, the descendants of Cain made rapid progress in the arts of life. Some of them began to rear cattle, others worked in brass and iron, while the inventive genius of Jubal devised the first simple instruments of music. But with all these gifts they forgot the Giver. Thus their very progress proved a way of sin. The brass and iron they forged into spears and swords to war with one another. And their musical talents they employed to celebrate their deeds of violence. The earliest song in the Bible is that in which Lamech boasts of the blood he has shed.

"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
Ye wives of Lamech, give ear to my speech:

A man have I slain for wounding me, And a boy for bruising me: If Cain be avenged seven times, Then Lamech seventy and seven."

Amid so much darkness one man's character shines out like a star. It is summed up in four words; but the whole essence of life is contained in them. "Enoch walked with God." As we read the simple statement, we are carried back in imagination to the sinless days when Adam walked with God in Eden. Not that God appeared to either Adam or Enoch in outward form. To walk with God means just to be the friend of God, to love Him, to worship Him "in spirit and in truth," to try to please Him in all things. Enoch's life was one unbroken round of such happy fellowship with God. In the morning he would wake up glad at heart for the new day His goodness had given him. On his way to work he would keep his eves open to the wondrous beauty of heaven and earth. The active hours he would fill up with honest toil, putting his very best into his work for God's sake. He would have a smile and a kindly greeting for all he met. He would be the constant friend of the poor and needy. At home he would seek to train his children in the fear of the Lord. But there would be nothing morose in his training. He knew that the fear of the Lord is joy and love; therefore he would throw himself with eager interest into all their childish activities, taking a real delight both in their work and in their play. Often in the evening he would wander out alone under the starry skies, to commit

them to the care of Him who had created all these things. When night came, he would reverently kneel with them in prayer, and together they would sleep the sleep of the righteous. So, whatever he did, he would carry on his face the reflection of the Friend with whom he walked, and help

to shed the light of heaven on earth.

It may seem hard for little ones to walk with God in this way. Yet Jesus said, "Of such is the Kingdom of heaven." And if we remember that He is the living image of God, we shall no longer think it so hard. He has always been the friend of children. When He lived here, the boys and girls of Palestine crowded about Him, clambered on His knees, clung to His arm, and nestled in His bosom. And though we cannot see and touch Him as they did, we can read the story of His life, think of Him and pray to Him, follow Him as our great Leader, and try to be more like Him in word and deed. This is walking with God. And we can practise it in everything we do, in our games as well as our prayers. For God means us to walk with Him, not as grown-up men and women, but as boys and girls, full of the brightness and gaiety of youth. The happier we are, the more will He rejoice in our friendship. For sunshine of heart and mind is the soul of friendship, with God as well as with men.

Enoch walked many years with God. Then suddenly, one bright morning, he vanished from the sight of men. "He was not; for God took him." He had lived so near to heaven that God simply

opened the door and led him in.

God may still call His friends home to Him as

quietly as that. One of Lord Tennyson's most touching poems, In The Children's Hospital, tells of Emmie, the girl with "the prettiest prattle" and "the gratefullest heart," who feels that her end is near, and asks "wise little Annie," in the cot beside her, what she should do. Annie bids her "cry to the dear Lord Jesus," who has said, "Little children should come to me." But how is He to know her, with so many beds in the ward?

"That was a puzzle for Annie. Again she consider'd and said:

'Emmie, you put out your arms, and you leave 'em outside on the bed-

The Lord has so much to see to! but, Emmie, you tell it him plain,

It's the little girl with her arms lying out on the counterpane."

In the morning doctor and nurse visit the ward, and see

"Her dear, long, lean, little arms lying out on the counterpane."

They believe her asleep again. But, like Enoch, she is not; for God has taken her.

"The Lord of the children had heard her, and Emmie had past away."

V

THE SWEET SCENT

THE influence of Enoch's faith waned all too quickly, and the world grew worse and worse. The spirit of God wrestled with men, but they would not repent. At last He made up His mind to destroy them by a great flood. Only Noah found favour in His eyes. He was a good man, who walked with God as faithfully as Enoch had done. At God's command he built him an ark of cypress wood, into which he brought his wife and children, with a few animals of every kind. When they had entered the ark, the flood descended upon the earth. For forty days and nights it rained in pitiless torrents. The waters rose till they covered the highest mountains, and every living creature died, except those in the ark. Then the rain ceased, and the waters began to sink. course of time Noah opened the window of the ark, and sent out a raven, to see whether the earth was dry. The raven had no love for the ark, and remained on the surface of the waters, flying to and fro till the land appeared. Then Noah sent out a dove, but she "found no rest for the sole of her foot," and soon returned to the ark. Seven days later he sent out the dove again. and she returned in the evening, with a freshly plucked olive leaf in her mouth. By this sign

Noah knew that the trees had appeared. So he waited seven other days, and sent out the dove again. This time she returned no more to him, and he knew that the earth was dry. Then he opened the door, and went out, he and all that were with him in the ark. And he built an altar, and offered sacrifices of every clean beast and bird. And God "smelled the sweet scent" of the sacrifice, and vowed never again to curse the ground for man's sake. And in token of the vow He caused a rainbow to appear in the sky, as a pledge that, "while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not fail."

What made the sacrifice smell so sweetly to God was the gratitude that lay behind it. Noah's whole soul bubbled over with praise; and his sacrifice was the utterance of that praise. For the same reason Jesus delighted in the sweet scent of Mary's ointment. To Him it was the outpouring of a heart which loved much because it had been forgiven much; and He prophesied that the memory of her gracious deed would remain fresh and fragrant wherever the Gospel was preached. Over every good man's life hangs a scent like that which lingers round Mary's name. When Professor Drummond visited Lake Shirwa, in the depths of Tropical Africa, he met an old female chief, who told him that long ago a white man had come to her village, spoken kindly to her, and given her a present of cloth. It was David Livingstone. And Drummond adds, "Wherever Livingstone's footsteps are crossed in Africa, the fragrance of

his memory seems to remain." Of that later African heroine, Mary Slessor, the White Queen of Okoyong, her biographer says she was like "a sweetbriar bush, hidden away in a lonely and lowly spot," whose fragrance scented the air on every side. So Florence Nightingale carried fragrance through the hospital wards of Scutari, and many another angel of mercy into the hearts of our soldiers in the last Great War. But we need not wait till we are older to become what St. Paul calls "savours of Christ" in the world. You remember Browning's Pippa, the little millgirl of Asolo, who passed through the city streets singing her sweet songs of God in His heaven. As she sang, the whole atmosphere seemed to be purified. Men living in sin were brought to a better mind; the dishonest returned to ways of honesty; love was awakened in the hearts of those who scoffed at love; the artist was inspired to produce better work; and the patriot was imbued with a purer passion for his country. If we cannot sing like Pippa, we can at least have a bunch of flowers for the sick, a cup of cold water for the thirsty, a kind word for the friendless, a bright smile for everyone. In these ways we, too, can help to sweeten life, to fill it with the scent of Paradise.

> "Little deeds of kindness, Little words of love, Make our earth an Eden, Like the heaven above."

VT

BUILDING A TOWER

FTER the flood men began to multiply once A more on the earth. For many years they remained one family, speaking one language. As they journeyed in the valley of the Euphrates, they came to the plain of Babylon, where they pitched their tents. Soon they determined to build a city, with a tower reaching to heaven, that they should never be separated, and might make themselves also a great name. So they dug up clay, baked it into bricks, used bitumen for mortar, and began to build. But in their plan for the building they took no account of God. They imagined they could work even better without Him, for there would then be no hindrance to their ambition. But He came down to see what they did; and when he discovered how godless were their aims, He threw confusion into their language, that they could no longer understand each other's speech. So the building stopped, and they were "scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth."

Like the builders of Babylon, we, too, are raising towers to the sky. These towers are just our achievements, that which we make of our lives. The bricks are the works we do. The strength and beauty of the towers will thus depend on the quality of our works. If they be shoddy, rough

and loose, the towers will rise up coarse and crooked; if they be true and good, the towers will mount in stately grace, "four-square to all the winds that blow." There need be no limit to the height of our towers. If we have any real ambition, indeed, we shall raise them as near to heaven as we can, and so win ourselves a name among our fellows. But for that we need a sure foundation. Many of us build without a foundation; and our towers are but castles in the air. Others build on the foundation of selfishness. Like the man described in Tennyson's Palace of Art, they make for themselves "a lordly pleasure-house," where their soul may "live alone unto herself in her high palace there;" but living only for themselves, they lose their touch with other men, and fall "like Herod, when the shout was in his ears." Too many great Emperors, Alexander and Cæsar, Napoleon and William the Second, have built on this foundation. They tried to conquer the world; but God confounded their plans, and they ended their days in exile or by the sword. In one way or other selfishness always leads to ruin. The only sure foundation is Jesus Christ and His rule of life. "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you." On this foundation men like Washington and Lincoln, Gladstone and General Gordon built. They had their ambitions; but their chief ambition was to do good, to fight for country and honour, to free the slaves, to secure justice for all men. So their towers reached to heaven, while their names enjoy immortal renown. We may not have gifts as great as theirs; but if we do our best with the gifts we have, we, too,

shall build towers that will last, and our names will be held in grateful remembrance.

"For me—to have made one soul
The better for my birth;
To have added but one flower
To the garden of the earth;

To have struck one blow for truth
In the daily fight with lies;
To have done one deed of right
In the face of calumnies;

To have sown in the souls of men One thought that will not die; To have been a link in the chain of life Shall be immortality."

E. HATCH.

VII

A GOOD SPORTSMAN

A MONG the people scattered from Babylon were those who founded the Empire of Assyria, with its capital at Nineveh. They were great conquerors; they were also great sportsmen. On their wonderful clay tablets we can still see pictures of their fights with lions and other wild beasts. But the Assyrians were cruel, both in war and in sport. The prophet Nahum calls Nineveh a city of blood. One man, however, was of a different stamp. Nimrod was a great sportsman; but he was a good sportsman. He was "a mighty hunter before the Lord."

The love of sport is one of our earliest instincts. The little child tosses its legs and arms about in pure playfulness. Boys and girls have their games of baseball and cricket, racing, skipping, hide-and-seek, clubs and housekeeping. Older folk enjoy their quieter recreations of golf and bowls, fishing and shooting. God has planted this love of sport in our souls, and He wishes us to play heartily and well. One day Jesus was watching the children of Jerusalem at their games and he saw some of them sulky and cross. Their companions proposed a wedding, and began to pipe and dance; but they would not play. Then they tried a funeral, and began to weep and wail; still

they would not play. And Jesus was greatly displeased. He liked to see children happy at their games. He liked also to see them play fair, to see them play like Nimrod "before the Lord." Many of us spoil the game, not only by our peevish temper, but by selfishness, cruelty, or foul play. We try to win by any means we can; and if we are beaten, we are vexed and sour. The good sportsman will always "play the game." He wishes not so much to gain glory for himself, as to help his team to win. As the master says in that splendid old book, Tom Brown's School Days, "he doesn't play that he may win, but that his side may." So he obeys his captain's orders, keeps in touch with his fellows, and passes to the next-hand man, if he has a better chance of scoring. He does his best to win; but he would rather lose than cheat. And if he does lose, he takes it manfully. He shakes hands, and leaves the field in perfect temper.

Sport is not merely an enjoyment for the moment: it is a training for the harder contests of life. You have all heard of Wellington's remark that "Waterloo was really won on the playing fields of Eton." With equal truth we may say that the battles in France and Flanders, Palestine and Mesopotamia, were won on the school-grounds of Europe and America. For it was there that our soldiers developed that strength and courage, discipline, devotion to duty, cheerfulness and good humour, which carried them through to victory. But sport is as real a training for ordinary work. The good sportsman will "play the game" at school and college, in business, on the farm and

ranch, or wherever he is. He will try to excel; but he will never stoop to mean and selfish methods. His hands will be clean, his heart high and brave, his spirit generous. He will do his best to work with others, for he knows that the purest success is that which comes through the working together of each for all. And whether he reaches his full ambition or not, he will enjoy the proud sense that he has "done his bit" before the Lord.

"There's a breathless hush in the Close to-night—
Ten to make and the match to win—
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play and the last man in.
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote—
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'

The sand of the desert is sodden red—
Red with the wreck of a square that broke;—
The gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
The river of death has brimmed his banks,
And England's far, and Honour a name;
But the voice of a school-boy rallies the ranks—
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'

This is the word that year by year,
While in her place the School is set,
Every one of her sons must hear,
And none that hears it dare forget.
This they all with a joyful mind
Bear through life like a torch in flame;
And falling fling to the host behind—
'Play up! play up! and play the game!''
H. NEWBOLT.

VIII

A BRAVE ADVENTURE

In those days of restless movement an Eastern chief called Terah settled at Ur of the Chaldees, a famous old city on the delta of the Tigris and Euphrates. The land round Ur was of gorgeous beauty. Great palm-trees dotted the plain. Fruit grew in rank luxuriance. Ur itself was a birthplace of learning and art. Its people, however, were idolators. They had long since forgotten the true God, and worshipped the sun, moon and stars. But God did not wish His children to remain in darkness, so He revealed Him-

self to Abram, the son of Terah.

A beautiful Jewish legend tells how the lad went out one morning and saw the sun rise in its glory. He said to himself, "Surely this is the Lord of the world; Him will I worship." But the evening came, and lo! the sun set, and the moon appeared with its galaxy of silver stars. Then he said to himself, "This now is the Lord of the world, and the stars are His servants; to Him will I kneel." But morning came once more; the moon and stars sank, and the sun rose anew in its glory. So he said to himself, "Now I know that neither the sun nor the moon is the Lord of the world; but He who controls both of them as His servants is the Creator and Ruler of all."

However this may be, Abram came to know God so intimately that he was called "the friend of God." And God chose him to be the father of the faithful, through whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. But he could not be the father of the faithful in that land of idolatry. So God bade him leave his country, his kindred, and his father's home, to go unto a land that He would show him. And Abram rose up, and went forth, "not knowing whither he went."

It is a fine proof of Abram's strength of character that Terah his father joined him in his brave adventure, along with Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son. Together they made their way along the Euphrates, until they reached Haran, the great market-town of Syria. Terah died; but Abram and Lot pushed ever onward, past the luscious orchards of Damascus. and over the Jordan, till they set foot in Palestine. This was the land God meant to give them. Abram built an altar, and claimed it in the name of the Lord. But they found no city to dwell in, for "the Canaanite was then in the land." So they passed through Jezreel to the charming vallev of Shechem, where Jesus sat by Jacob's well, and on to Luz or Bethel, where Jacob saw his vision of angels. And wherever they went, Abram set up an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Three hundred years ago another band of pilgrims left their country, their kindred, and their fathers' home. They, too, were friends of God. But they found no "freedom to worship God" in

England. So they set sail on the Mayflower, "to go unto a land that He would show them." The parting from their friends was sorrowful. voyage was long and stormy. The land they first sighted was bleak and inhospitable. But they carried with them the faith that had supported them in so many trials. And no sooner did they reach the harbour than, like Abram, they called upon the name of the Lord. As one of their number tells us, "They fell on their knees and blessed the God of heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all its perils and miseries." Thus they claimed America for God. And they and their children were blessed abundantly, and became a blessing to all the families of the earth.

Our own lives are just such ventures upon the unknown. In our fathers' homes our vessels are shaped, and trimmed, and fitted with bow and helm, masts and rigging. When all is ready, we put out to sea, our sails unfurled, and our flags streaming in the breeze. We do not know what skies may look down on us, what calms or storms may meet us, what strange lands may beckon us to their shores, what other ships may cross our path. This only we know, that, if God be the steersman, all will be well. The sunshine will cheer us, while the mists and storms will make us the finer sailors. Wherever God's hand at the wheel may direct our course, goodness and mercy will follow us like favouring winds. We shall carry lights that will help our comrades on the deep. And at the end we shall sail with masts erect and colours flying into the haven of Eternal Life.

"We watch a ship sail out to sea
Upon the ebbing tide,
And on the heaving ocean wave
We see it gently ride;
The sails are spread, the helmsman steers
To some far distant strand,
And well he knows he leaves behind
His friends and native land.

Upon the far horizon-line
The ship now disappears,
And yet we know the helmsman has
No need for anxious fears,
For other seas, both broad and wide,
Are stretched before his eyes;
And he still steers to some fair port
That in the distance lies.

And, lo, when dear ones pass away
And vanish from our sight,
They, too, will sail o'er level seas
Towards God's eternal light;
The dim horizon-line will be
To them no sudden change;
We call it death—it is the Life
Beyond earth's narrow range."

A. C. FRYOR.

IX

HALF-TRUTHS

▲ BRAM had not been long in Palestine when his faith was sorely tried. "There was a famine in the land." The rains had failed, and the crops and grass dried up. Abram's flocks grew lean for want of food, while he and his household began to suffer the pangs of hunger. Often during these dark weeks he must have thought regretfully of the rich harvests in Ur. But there could be no going back to the land of his fathers. So he went down to Egypt, that well-stored granary by the Nile. This caused him another trial. He had left his altar behind him; and he was nervous and depressed. He felt as if God had brought him there to die. He may even have heard the story, which we can still read in an Egyptian book, of a Pharaoh sending armed men to carry away a beautiful woman from her husband. And, as Sarai was "a woman fair to look upon," he was afraid they might slay him to get possession of her. So he bade her say she was his sister, that no harm might come to him on her account.

This was not exactly a lie. It was what we call a half-truth. For Sarai was really the daughter of his father, though not the daughter of his mother. But half-truths are sometimes more

dangerous than downright lies. In Tennyson's poem, *The Grandmother*, the poor old woman recalls with bitter shame a half-truth she had uttered seventy years before. And she says:

"The parson made it his text that week, and he said likewise,

That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies.

That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,

But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight."

Had Abram told the full truth, Pharaoh would have treated him and his wife with all respect. As it was, he nearly involved them both in great sin. For, when the princes of Egypt spoke to him of Sarai's beauty, he sent for her, and learning she was Abram's sister, he brought her to the palace, intending soon to make her one of his queens. Thus the blessing promised to Abram would have been turned into a curse.

Some of us have tried to get out of difficulties by shifts and evasions of the truth. But we have only found ourselves by these means plunged into deeper bogs than before. The one safe rule is to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." There is no character in fiction more admired than Jeanie Deans, the heroine of The Heart of Midlothian. Sir Walter Scott tells us he drew the picture from Helen Walker, the daughter of a small farmer in the parish of Irongray, near Dumfries. Her sister Tibbie had committed a terrible crime, and was on trial for her

life. Helen might have gained her acquittal by a little prevarication. But she said, "It is impossible for me to swear to a falsehood; and, whatever may be the consequence, I will give my oath according to my conscience." She did so; and Tibbie was condemned to death. But Helen would not leave her thus to her fate. She got up a petition, telling in simple words the peculiar facts of the case, walked the long, weary way to London, laid it before the Duke of Argyle, and secured the pardon she asked for. So she saved her sister's life. But she likewise saved her own honour. And honour is the precious gold of character.

"This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."
SHAKESPEARE.

X

A FATAL CHOICE

A BRAM returned from Egypt a sadder but a wiser man. He had learned his own weakness; but he had learned also the secret of strength. So he went his way to the altar at Bethel, and there anew "called upon the name of the Lord." Then he rose from his knees determined to live more worthily of his faith. From that moment prosperity seemed to pour down on him. Both Lot and he became so rich in substance that "the land was not able to bear them," and quarrels broke out between their herdsmen. Abram was saddened by their quarrelling, all the more because "the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land," and made sport of their feuds. So he begged Lot that their strife might end, for they were brethren. "Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me! If thou will take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou wilt take the right hand, then I will go to the left."

Abram's proposal was as generous as it could be. Had Lot been a man of his spirit, he would have left the choice with him. Unhappily, he was a mean and grasping character, who thought only of himself. So "he lifted up his eyes, and beheld the circle of land round the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord." And he chose that circle of land as his own, and moved his tent toward Sodom, while Abram was driven to the rough, uncultivated

highlands in the West.

Jesus tells us it is possible to lose life by trying to save it for selfish ends, and to save life by being prepared to lose it for God and honour. So these two men found it. Lot attempted to gain the whole world, but he lost everything in the attempt. When he moved his tent toward Sodom, he was regardless of the fact that "the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." If he thought about it at all, he may have imagined he could keep clear of their sinful ways. But little by little he and his family were drawn into the full current of the stream. At first he had pitched his tent outside of Sodom. Then he built a house in the city itself. His wife made friend with the ladies of Sodom. His daughters were betrothed to men of Sodom. And when the city was destroyed, as we shall see, Lot was saved only "as by fire." His wife was so attached to Sodom that she lingered to look back upon the city, and was caught by the sulphur fumes, and turned into a pillar of salt. His daughters were left homeless. He himself sank into deep dishonour. All this while the blossoms of God's favour were falling thick on Abram. No sooner had Lot gone than He led him to the top of the hill above Bethel, and bade him lift up his eyes, and look northward and southward, and eastward and westward. And He said to him, "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." And when Abram moved his camp to the plain of Mamre, near Hebron, God renewed His promise of blessing. His hidden plans He revealed to him. For his sake He spared Lot from destruction. He made him a centre of good to his neighbours. He blessed him in his home as well as his heart. He gave him children and grand-children. And in the course of the ages He sent His own Son, born of the seed of Abraham, to be the Saviour of the world.

The time comes when every one of us must choose where and how he is to live. Too many choose as Lot did. They care for nothing but worldly success. So they choose a career that will bring them riches and pleasure, without regard to the nature of the work, or the friendships they will form. Such a choice is always fatal. A man may pile up millions; but if his life is dishonourable, his millions are but dust in the balance. And if his companions are evil, he will not be long in learning their evil ways. To make the most of our lives, we must "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Then we shall find that all other good things will be added to us. The man who takes conscience as his guiding light is sure of success. He may not leap into sudden wealth. But he will steadily gain a position of honour and influence. He will enjoy the respect of all good men. Above all, he will find favour with God and will live in the sunshine of His love for ever.

> "O happy is the man who hears Instruction's warning voice;

And who celestial Wisdom makes His early, only choice.

For she has treasures greater far Than east or west unfold; And her rewards more precious are Than all their stores of gold.

In her right hand she holds to view A length of happy days; Riches, with splendid honours joined, Are what her left displays.

She guides the young with innocence, In pleasures' paths to tread; A crown of glory she bestows Upon the hoary head.

According as her labours rise, So her rewards increase; Her ways are ways of pleasantness, And all her paths are peace."

XI

THE KING OF PEACE

Lors soon learned the folly of his choice. The kind of Sodom had picked a quarrel with Chedorlaomer, the powerful ruler of Elam, and challenged him to fight. Chedorlaomer promptly accepted the challenge. With three vassal kings, he swept down on Palestine, ravaged the land of the Canaanites and Perizzites, joined battle with the king of Sodom and his allies in the valley of Siddim, near the Dead Sea, defeated them utterly, sacked their cities, and carried off prisoners and spoil. Among the other prisoners he took Lot, who then "dwelt in Sodom," together with all his household.

By good chance one of the prisoners escaped, and told Abram what had happened. Had he been a selfish man like Lot, he would have received the message with indifference or contempt. Lot had made his bed with the men of Sodom: now let him lie in it as best he could! Many of us would have felt like that. But Abram's chivalrous heart rose up in great sympathy for Lot. He was his own brother's son; and he could not abandon him to his enemies. So he rose up, armed his trained men, three hundred and eighteen in number, led them by forced marches against the invaders, and caught them up at Dan, near the sources of the

Jordan. Then he divided his men into three bands, fell on Chedorlaomer's camp by night, smote them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, on the left side of Damascus. And he brought back all the prisoners and spoil, with Lot, his

family and his goods.

The king of Sodom was deeply moved by Abram's generosity, and he came to meet him on his return from the battle. With a true sense of fairness, he asked only for the prisoners, well content that Abram should keep the rest of the spoil. But Abram's generosity surpassed all he had expected. He would take nothing for himself, not even a thread or a lace for his sandals, lest the king of Sodom might say, "I have made Abram rich." Only for his servants did he seek an allowance for the food they had eaten on the march, and for certain men who had gone with him, Aner, and Eshcol, and Mamre, their due portion of the spoil.

At this point a new character steps upon the scene. Melchizedek, king of Salem or Jerusalem, "the city of Peace," brought bread and wine to refresh Abram and his men. And he blessed Abram in the name of God Most High, whose priest he was. And Abram accepted the blessing with gladness, and gave him tithes of all that

he had.

Imagination has played round the figure of Melchizedek. The Epistle to the Hebrews describes him as "without father, without mother," and likens him to Jesus Christ, the Son of God Most High. The writer means that he received his kingdom, not by inheritance from father or

mother, but directly from God Most High, because of his name and character. Melchizedek is "the king of Righteousness"; and only a king of Righteousness could be prince of "the city of Peace." The character of Melchizedek was in all respects equal to his name. He lived in the fear of God Most High, and ruled his kingdom with justice. Thus he kept the city in peace, and became a prophecy of Him who is the true King of Righteousness and Prince of Peace.

We must sometimes fight, and we should then fight as bravely as Abram did. But we all love peace. We wish to have peace of mind. We wish to live in peace with our neighbours. And we long to see peace on earth. But peace will only come through righteousness. We can have no peace of mind if we do wrong. For conscience will keep us troubled and tormented. Nor can we have peace with our neighbours if we treat them unfairly. Our foolish quarrels all spring from injustice in some form or other. And the wars that have deluged the world in blood are the result of men's selfishness and greed. The angel of peace will descend on earth when we learn to do the right, straight thing to everyone, when we play fair in our games and in our work, when we deal with others as we would be dealt with ourselves. For, as Isaiah saw long ago,

"The effect of righteousness shall be peace,
And the fruit of justice abiding security;
My people shall dwell in abodes of peace,
In sure habitations and quiet resting-places."
Isaiah xxxii: 17, 18

$\mathbf{X}\mathbf{\Pi}$

THE FLAMING TORCH

THE excitement of battle was over, and Abram returned to his flocks and herds. Once more he felt lonely and discouraged. He was surrounded by jealous neighbours who sought to take advantage of him. At any moment, too, Chedorlaomer might fall upon him with stronger forces. And there was no sweet sound of childish voices in the home to cheer him, no young life to share his burdens, and to inherit his substance when he was gone. "Behold! I shall pass away childless, and the heir of my household shall be this Eliezer of Damascus." But the word of the Lord came to him in a dream by night, saying, "Fear not, Abram! I am thy shield; and thy reward shall be exceeding great." His enemies might be many and powerful, but God would defend him against them all. And his reward would be great beyond his expectations. In God's good time a son would be given him. And when he was gathered to his fathers in peace, that son would be heir both to his wealth and to his blessing. And his seed would become as numerous as the stars of heaven. And after years of affliction and exile they would receive the land of Palestine as their home. And the blessing would never fail them, but would be

as a light upon their path, "shining more and

more unto the perfect day."

Abram believed God, and He counted it to him for righteousness. Yet he wished for a sign that all this would happen. So God said to him, "Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon." And he took them all, and divided them in two, and laid the pieces over against each other. And when the birds of prey swooped down upon the pieces, he drove them away. As the sun was setting, Abram sank into a deep sleep, "and, lo! an horror of great darkness fell upon him." Then he saw in his dreams a furnace belching forth volumes of fire and smoke. From the mouth of the furnace their leapt a tongue of fire, like a "flaming torch," which passed between the pieces, and consumed them. So God accepted the sacrifice. And that same night He made a covenant with Abram that He would assuredly fulfill all His promises.

The flaming torch is just the light which accompanies God's presence. Sometimes that light rises like the morning sun, scattering the shadows of night, and flooding the world with brightness and warmth. Sometimes it blazes like "a consuming fire," melting all things by its heat. But even when it burns, it purifies and saves. The rough ore from the mine is thrown into the crucible, and passed through red-hot flames. The alloy is melted off, and the sterling gold comes out. Thus also God's presence refines our souls, burning up what is false and foul in us, and making what is good shine with a purer lustre. So He

prepares us to dwell at last in that light of His in which there is no darkness.

"God's eternal fires are melting
Precious gold from meaner dross;
God alone completes the labour—
Love allows no flaw or loss.

Love will cast the priceless treasure Into fair enduring mould; God will burnish bright His metal— Virgin grain of proven gold."

IIIX

THE GOD THAT SEES

YEARS passed, and no child came to Abram's home. At last Sarai lost all patience, and resolved to take things into her own hands. So she followed an evil custom of the time, and gave her Egyptian maid Hagar to Abram as a second wife. Hagar became quite vain of her new position, and soon began to despise her mistress. This roused Sarai's quick temper, and she treated Hagar so harshly that the poor girl fled from her presence, and like a wounded creature made tracks for her old home in Egypt. When she reached the desert of Shur, close to the Egyptian border, she lay down wearied beside a well. There the angel of the Lord appeared to her, saving, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither goest thou?" Hagar answered and said, "I flee from the presence of Sarai, my mistress." Then the angel said, "Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself to her hands." And He went on to promise her a son called Ishmael, which means "God heareth," because God had heard the cry of her affliction. And Hagar said, "Thou art a God that seeth," and she called the name of the well Beer-lahai-roi, "The well of the Living One that seeth me."

A writer much loved by young folk, Sir J. M.

Barrie, tells us in A Window in Thrums that this was his mother's favourite text, and that she learned to love it through a terrible experience that happened to her. She had a little son, Joey, who meant to be a minister, and planned to preach his first sermon from "Thou God seest me." But when he was six years old a cart ran over him, and "a handful of men carried Joey's dead body to his mother." Twenty years afterward she said, "That day he was coffined, for all the minister prayed. I found it hard to say, 'Thou God seest me.' It's the text I like best noo, though, an' when Hendry an' Leeby is at the kirk, I turn't up often, often in the Bible. I read frae the beginnin' o' the chapter, but when I come to 'Thou God seest me, 'I stop an' let the Book lie in my lap, for aince a body's sure o' that they're sure o' all. I dinna ken 'at I would ever hae been sae sure o' that if it hadna been for him, an' so I think I see 'im sailin' doon to the pulpit juist as he said he would do."

I fear to many of us the text is not so dear as it was to her. We have been taught by some foolish nurse or teacher to think of God's eye as a great lantern staring down from the sky upon us, spying on all we do. And we try to keep away from the sight of it. We feel like the child who said, "Oh, I wish there were at least one room in the house where God could not see me." But God's eye is not that of a spy: it is that of a Father. We know what a joy it is to wake up in the morning and find the eyes of father or mother bent over us. Or if we are walking with our friends, and see them coming to meet us, how our

own eyes light up with pleasure! If we are running a race, or playing some other game, how keen we are to do our best if we know they are watching us! If we are hurt, or in trouble of any kind, what a comfort just to look into their eyes, and drink in the love and sympathy that pour from them as from a fountain! And on the closing day of school, when we are called up for the prizes we have won, how our faces flush with happiness if we catch their eyes gleaming with pride at our success! The eye of God is even more tender than that of a parent. It falls upon us when we do wrong, but far more in love than in anger. When the prodigal left his father's home, the father watched for his return day after day; and when at last he saw him afar off, his eyes shone with a great glow of affection, and he ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. God's eye is fixed on us with a love like that. It is filled with tears of sorrow when we sin, and with tears of gladness when we come back to Him. It overflows with pity when we are in trouble, and with pleasure when we are happy. Above all, it shines with joy when we do well. If we love God as our Father in heaven. we shall do what we can to bring Him this joy. Then we shall no longer fear His eye upon us, but shall be glad like Hagar to think that

"God is always near me,
Hearing what I say,
Knowing all my thoughts and deeds,
All my work and play;

God is always near me— In the darkest night He can see me just the same As by mid-day light;

God is always near me,

Though so young and small;

Not a look, or word, or thought,

But God knows it all."

XIV

A GOOD MAN'S PRAYER

HAGAR returned to her mistress, and soon Ishmael was born. He grew up a strong, sturdy boy, full of spirit, free and daring as a young wild ass. Abram loved his open, sunny ways, and longed that he might "live before the Lord," and so become heir to the promised blessing. But God appeared once more to Abram, and told him that in another year Sarai would have a son called Isaac, "the laughing boy," who would not merely gladden their own hearts, but would be a fountain of joy to all the world. And in token of the promise He changed his name to Abraham, "father of a multitude," while Sarai's name He changed to Sarah, "princess," for she would be the mother of many kings and princes.

A few months later, Abraham was sitting at his tent door in the plains of Mamre, when he lifted up his eyes and saw three men standing near him in the heat of the day. With true Eastern hospitality, he ran to meet them, bowed himself toward the ground, and invited them to rest a little and wash their dusty feet under the oak of Mamre, while he would fetch them "a morsel of food." Then he hastened to Sarah, and bade her knead three measures of fine flour, and make it into pancakes. Next he ran to the flock, and

picked out a calf "tender and good," and gave it to a young man to prepare. When all was ready, he brought the cakes and the calf, with some curds and milk, and spread a table for them on the green grass under the tree, waiting upon them in person while they ate the food.

These men were messengers from the Lord, and they began to tell him again of the boy Isaac who should be given to Sarah and him. All this time Sarah remained hidden behind the curtain of the door. When she heard the men speak of Isaac, she laughed in sheer unbelief. Then one of the men, who was the angel of the Lord, said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the set time, when the season cometh round, I will return unto thee, and Sarah shall have a son." In great fear Sarah denied that she had laughed. But the angel said, "Nay; but thou didst laugh." And Sarah stood blushing for shame.

When the meal was finished, the three men rose up, and turned their eyes toward Sodom, while Abraham went to escort them a little distance on their way. Then the angel of the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I am about to do?" So He told him of the sin of Sodom, and of His intention to destroy it utterly. Abraham's heart was filled with sorrow, not only for Lot and his family, but for any other innocent souls that might be found in the city. So he drew near to plead with the Lord for them. "Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? Perchance there may be fifty righteous within the city. Wilt thou not spare the place for the fifty

righteous that are therein? Far be it from Thee to slav the righteous with the wicked! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And the Lord said, "If I find fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake." And Abraham answered and said, "Behold now! I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, though I am but dust and ashes. Perchance there may lack five of the fifty righteous. Wilt Thou destroy all the city for lack of five?" And He said, "If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it." And Abraham once more answered and said, "Perchance there may be forty found there." And He said, "I will not do it for forty's sake." And Abraham said, "Oh, let not the Lord be angry if I speak yet again! Perchance there may be thirty found there." And He said, "If I find thirty there, I will not do it." And Abraham said, "Behold now! I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord. Perchance there may be twenty found there." And He said, "I will not destroy it for twenty's sake." And Abraham said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry if I speak again but this once! Perchance there may be ten found there." And He said, "I will not destroy it for ten's sake."

Abraham could plead no more, so he returned to his tent, while the angel of the Lord followed His companions on their way toward Sodom. Perhaps Abraham did wrong not to plead still further. At all events, Jesus placed no limit to the power of prayer. He prayed for Jerusalem, even when He foretold that not one stone of the Temple would be left untouched upon another. He prayed for

the enemies who nailed Him to the Cross. He prayed for Judas who betrayed Him. So too He taught His disciples that they "ought always to pray without fainting." Not that our prayers are invariably answered in the way we expect! Like Jesus Himself, we must remember to pray, "Not my will, but Thine, be done." If we pray in this spirit, we shall not merely receive the answer God sees to be good for us, but we shall feel a warmer sympathy with those for whom we pray, and shall help to lift their life and our own a little nearer to heaven.

"If thou shouldst never see my face again, Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice Rise like a fountain for me night and day. For what are men better than sheep or goats That nourish a blind life within the brain, If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer Both for themselves and those who call them friend? For so the whole round earth is every way Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

TENNYSON.

XV

THE SMOKING FURNACE

WHILE the angel of the Lord talked with Abraham, the two others went on to Sodom. They reached the city in the cool of the evening, and found Lot sitting alone at the gate. As soon as he saw the strangers, he rose up, like Abraham, bowed himself to the ground, and begged them to come to his house, and spend the night with him. When they refused, he "urged them greatly"; so they went with him, and entered his house. "And he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat." But the men of Sodom heard of it, and they came thronging to Lot's house, and demanded that he should hand over the strangers to them. Fearing lest harm should befall his guests, Lot went out, shutting the door behind him, and prayed the men to leave them alone. But they began to insult him, and to threaten him with still worse things. "And they pressed sore upon Lot, and drew near to break the door." But the angels put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house, and shut the door behind him. "And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves to find the door."

When they had thus saved Lot from the vio-

lence of the people, they told him of the destruction God meant to bring on Sodom, and asked him to get together his wife and daughters, and the men who were to marry them, and flee with them out of the city. So he went to the men who were to marry his daughters, and said, "Up, get you out of this place! for the Lord will destroy the city." But he seemed to them as one that jested, and they refused to go with him. When the morning broke, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." As he still hesitated, they laid hold of his hand, and of the hands of his wife and daughters, and hurried them outside the city, and said, "Escape for thy life! Look not behind thee, nor linger in all the circle of the Plain! Escape to the mountains of Moab, lest thou be consumed!"

The way was far, and Lot felt himself too weak to cover it all that day. So he pleaded with the angels to let him rest at Zoar, a little city near at hand. And the angels granted his request, and spared the city for his sake. By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had fully risen. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and upon the other cities of the Plain, brimstone and fire out of heaven. "And He overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and everything that grew upon the ground." And when Abraham went that morning to the place where the Lord had talked with him, he lifted up his eyes to the Plain, "and lo! the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace."

The plain on which Sodom and Gomorrah once

stood, that circle of land which seemed to Lot like "the garden of the Lord," is now a scene of utter desolation. No tree or grass grows on it. No living thing crosses its dreary wastes. It is a standing witness to the judgment of God. The cities of the Plain were so corrupt that they polluted the whole land, so He had to wipe them off the face of the earth. We are reminded of many other examples of God's judgment: Babylon and Nineveh swallowed up by the sands of Mesopotamia, Pompeii and Herculaneum buried beneath the ashes of Vesuvius, Jerusalem itself rising like a smoking furnace before the torches of Titus and his soldiers. In later times we have seen great Empires like Spain and Germany crushed under the weight of their military pride, and Turkey dying a slow death for her cruelty. As with nations; so with men. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." He who gives himself up to sinful indulgence falls a victim to loathsome disease. Even if he live on, his life is but a lingering death. His bodily strength is sapped, his senses are dulled, his conscience is seared as with a hot iron, his affections are hardened. At last he sinks into the grave like a spent volcano. And after death he must meet God with a soul naked and empty, a prey to the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting,
With exactness grinds He all."

LONGFELLOW.

XVI

THE WELL IN THE WILDERNESS

COON after Abraham returned from watching the smoke of Sodom, his son Isaac was born. Sarah could now laugh, not in unbelief, but for pure joy of heart. Abraham was as happy as she. Though now an old man, he loved to dandle the boy on his knee, to play with him, and to sing him the sweet songs of childhood. On the day he was weaned, he made a great feast, at which the whole camp sat down to share in his happiness. But one little cloud threw a shadow over his mirth. Sarah saw Ishmael, the son of Hagar, playing with Isaac. Annoyed that he should have an equal place with Isaac in the home, she demanded that Abraham should cast him out with his mother. Abraham was grieved to part with Ishmael, for he still loved the high-spirited boy. Yet Isaac was his heir, and could not enjoy his rightful standing in the camp if Ishmael were allowed to remain. So he rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a skin full of water, and placed them on Hagar's shoulder, with the child, and sent her away. Once more the friendless girl turned her steps in the direction of Egypt. But when she reached the wilderness of Beersheba, many miles from her journey's end, she found the water spent in the skin. Having no hope of

saving the child's life, she cast him under a shrub in the wilderness, while she went and sat down about a bowshot off, that she might not see him die. But God heard Ishmael's cry, and He sent an angel who called to Hagar from heaven, saying, "What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not! for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make of him a great nation." Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; "and she went, and filled the skin with

water, and gave the lad drink."

The African traveller, Mungo Park, was once wandering like Hagar through the wilderness. He was alone, destitute, robbed of all he had, and in danger from men and beasts. He felt as if nothing remained for him but to lie down and die. But at that moment "the extraordinary beauty of a small moss" caught his eye, and he reflected, that he was still "under the protecting eye of that Providence who has condescended to call Himself the stranger's friend." So he rose to his feet, and continued his journey with new courage and hope; assured that relief was at hand. And in this he was not disappointed. On another occasion, when he was almost parched with thirst, he heard in the distance the loud, harsh noise of the croaking of frogs. In his ears it sounded like "heavenly music," for it sang of water. He followed the sound, and ere long arrived at some muddy pools, "so full of frogs that it was difficult to discern the water." But to the thirsty traveller those muddy pools were as truly a gift of God as the purest and freshest of springs. So

once more he lifted his eyes to heaven, and thanked the Friend who had provided for his needs by opening up a "well in the wilderness." And he went on his way with a brave, glad heart.

If only our eyes are open to the goodness of God, we shall find many such wells in the wilderness. A glint of sunshine piercing the mist, the virgin beauty of the snowdrop, the lark's song in the sky, the rippling laughter of a child, "the little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love": all these are fountains of living water, which refresh our thirsty souls, and help us to carry on the daily round with thankfulness and joy. As Robert Louis Stevenson says,

"The world is so full of a number of thing, I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

But the true well of life is found in Jesus Christ. He that tastes even of the sweetest springs of earthly enjoyment shall thirst again; "but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

XVII

SWEARING AN OATH

A BRAHAM now moved south to Gerar, on the Philistine border. Here, too, he built an altar, and called on the name of the Lord. All things continued to prosper under his hand. When Abimelech, king of Gerar, saw how God was with him in all that he did, he asked Abraham to swear an oath that he would be his friend, and would show kindness to himself, and his son, and his son's son, as he had shown kindness to him. So Abraham swore an oath. But soon there came a rift in their friendship. Abimelech's servants had seized some wells that Abraham had digged, and Abraham went to Abimelech to complain. Abimelech said he knew nothing at all about the matter. So Abraham digged another well. And he brought seven ewe lambs from his flock, and gave them to Abimelech as a witness that the well was his. And the two of them made a covenant with one another, and swore an oath to maintain it. And they called the name of the place Beersheba, "the Well of the Oath."

In swearing the oath, Abraham was just conforming to the practice of his time. Men had then so little faith in each other's word that they would believe nothing that was not backed by an oath.

So they swore not only in God's name, but by heaven and earth, by Jerusalem, even by the hair of the head. I fear the habit of swearing has by no means died out. There are many among us, boys as well as men, who punctuate every other sentence by an oath. Such a practice is very displeasing to God. The third commandment says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." And Jesus bids us swear not at all. "Let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

No one follows Jesus' rule in this respect more sincerely than the Quakers. They will not even take an oath in the law-courts. But just because of this men accept their word without a shadow of doubt. For the simpler our speech, the more men trust it. Should we have occasion to take an oath as witnesses or servants of the State, let us do it with all solemnity, as before the everlasting God. Otherwise, let our words be pure and true. And men will honour us as they did Proteus, of whom Shakespeare writes in The Two Gentlemen of Verona:

"His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles,
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate,
His tears pure messengers sent from his heart,
His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth."

Shakespeare.

XVIII

THE RAM IN THE THICKET

A BRAHAM was at last reaping the full reward of his faith. He was prosperous in business, rich in goods, surrounded by all the comforts that wealth could buy him. He enjoyed the respect of his neighbours. Above all, he was happy in his home. Sarah was more than ever the delight of his eyes. And their son Isaac was growing up to be a fine young man, the joy and hope of their declining years. But at the very moment when the star of Abraham's fortune seemed to shine most brightly, his faith was touched to the quick.

It was the custom in those days for a father to offer up his eldest son as a sacrifice to the gods. Abraham felt called upon to make the same great proof of faith. One evening, as he slept, he heard a voice saying to him, "Abraham, Abraham!" He answered, "Here am I." Then the voice said, "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering on one of the mountains that I will tell thee of." How these words must have cut into Abraham's heart! But he would not withhold even Isaac from the Lord. So he "rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac

his son; and he set off toward the place of which God had told him."

On the third day of their journey, "Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off;" so he left his young men with the ass, took the fire and the knife in his hand, laid the wood for the burnt-offering on Isaac's shoulder, "and they went on both of them together." As they continued their journey in silence, Isaac said to Abraham, "My father!" And Abraham said, "Here am I, my son." And he said, "Behold! the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" And Abraham said, "God will see to the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son." So

they went on both of them together.

When they came to the place that God had told him of, Abraham built an altar, laid the wood in order upon it, bound Isaac his son, and placed him on the altar, above the wood. Then he stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." And the angel said: "Put not forth thine hand against the lad, nor do any harm to him at all! for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and behold! there was a ram caught by his horns in a thicket near him. And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering instead of his son. And he named the place Jehovah-Jireh, "The Lord will see to it."

Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham

a second time out of heaven, and said, "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord: Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, I will bless thee abundantly, and will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall win possession of the gate of their enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." And Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba, and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

A little girl once heard a minister pleading for Christmas gifts to the poor. He said they must give the very best they had. The girl had just received a beautiful doll, chosen and dressed by her mother with loving care. So she gave this. It was like sacrificing her own child, and nearly broke her heart, while it caused pain also to her mother, who felt that her gift was not appreciated. But God does not mean us to make martyrs of ourselves or our children without cause. The sacrifice He asks for is the willing sacrifice of heart and mind. That is, he wishes us to live for His honour, to use our talents faithfully, and to do what we can to make this world a better place. He wishes also that we should train our children to walk in the same ways. If in course of time He bid us give them to some great labour of love, at home or abroad, "the Lord will see to it." As Jesus said, "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

XIX

A LONELY GRAVE

A BRAHAM was now called to drink the bit-terest cup of sorrow. His wife Sarah died in Hebron, the centre of so many happy memories. "And Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her." When his first outbreak of grief was over he had to find a grave in which to bury her. So he went to the children of Heth, who owned the land near Hebron, and with delicate courtesy laid his request before them. "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: I pray you, give me possession of a burvingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." With equal courtesy the children of Heth met his request. "Hear us, my lord! Thou art a prince of God among us. Therefore in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; for none of us will withhold his sepulchre from thee." Then Abraham rose up, and bowed himself to the ground before the children of Heth, and said to them: "If ye be willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, I pray you, speak a good word for me with Ephron, the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which is in the corner of the field that belongeth to him. For the full market price let him give it to me in your presence as a burying-ground."

Then Ephron, the son of Zohar, answered and said to Abraham: "I pray thee, my lord, hear me! The field and the cave that is therein I give thee as a free gift: in the presence of the sons of my people I give it thee. Bury thy dead in it." Once more Abraham bowed himself to the ground before the children of Heth, and said to Ephron in the presence of his people: "If thou wouldest but hear me! Of a surety I will give thee the price of the field. Take it of me, that I may bury my dead there." Then Ephron answered and said to Abraham: "I pray thee, my lord, hear me! It is land worth four hundred shekels of silver, but what is that between me and thee? Bury thy dead in it." And Abraham weighed out the amount of silver Ephron had mentioned, even four hundred shekels of silver, in money current with the merchants, and gave it to Ephron. So the field of Machpelah, with the cave that was in it, was made sure unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of all the children of Heth who went in at the gate of the city. And Abraham buried Sarah in the cave.

Thus Abraham's first stake in Palestine was a grave. For centuries he and his family had no other foothold in the land. But the sacred dust that lay there was the pledge of full possession. And to the present day Machpelah is the most hallowed spot in Palestine alike to Jews and Moslems. So, too, the graves of our fathers are our most precious claim to an inheritance in our country's glory.

"Our fathers' sepulchres are here,
And here our kindred dwell,
Our children, too; how should we love
Another land so well?"

In a special sense the fields on which brave men fought and died are holy ground. The Greeks honoured Thermopylæ as the altar of their freedom. For the same reason the Englishman venerates Runnymede, the Scotsman Bannockburn, the American Gettysburg, and all together the blood-red plains of France and Flanders. Over each of them we may breathe Lincoln's immortal

words at Gettysburg:

"We are met on a great battle-field. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that the nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate-we cannot hallow-this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of free-dom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

But there is one spot on earth more sacred to the heart of Christians than any of these. It is the grave where our Lord lay, and from which He rose victorious on the first Easter morning. That grave is the centre of all our hope; for it brings us the assurance of life eternal. As He rose, we shall rise. As He lives, we shall live.

"O death, where is thy sting?
O grave, where is thy victory?
The sting of death is sin;
And the strength of sin is the law.
But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord."

1 Cor. xi:55-57.

XX

AN EVENING ROMANCE

FROM scenes of death and burial we pass to one of the most charming idylls in the Bible. Isaac had now reached full manhood, and must marry and settle down in life. It was the father's duty then to arrange a marriage for his son. Now Abraham did not wish Isaac to take to wife any of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom he dwelt. So he sent his servant Eliezer of Damascus to Haran, his old home, to fetch him a bride from among his own people and kindred. Eliezer took ten of his master's camels, laden with costly presents, and went to Haran. He reached the gate of the city one evening, "about the time when the women go out to draw water." So he made his camels kneel down beside the well, and prayed to the Lord, the God of his master Abraham, to send him good speed, and show kindness unto his master Abraham. Then he thought of a sign by which he should know the bride whom God had chosen for Isaac. "Behold! I stand by the well, and the daughters of the men of the city are now coming out to draw water. If then I say to a girl, 'Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink,' and she say, 'Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also,' let her be the one whom Thou has appointed for Thy servant Isaac!"

Eliezer had hardly uttered the words when Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Abraham's brother Nahor, came down to the well. with her pitcher on her shoulder. Rebekah was a young woman of great beauty, "very fair to look upon." She had also that winsome grace which comes from a kindly heart. Thus no sooner did Eliezer ask for a drink than she hastened to let down her pitcher, and gave him drink. When she had satisfied him, she said, "I will draw for thy camels also, until they have had enough." So she hastened to empty her pitcher into the trough, and ran again to the well, and drew water for all his camels. All this time Eliezer watched her in silence, wondering in his heart whether the Lord had thus early answered his prayer. When she had finished giving the camels drink, he had no more doubt. So he took a gold ring of half a shekel weight, and two gold bracelets of ten shekels weight, and placed them on her hands. And he asked her whose daughter she was, and whether there was room in her father's house for him and his camels to lodge in. She told him she was Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, and assured him there was both room and food in the house for them to lodge in. And Eliezer bowed his head, and worshipped the Lord, and said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who hath not left off His loving-kindness and His truth toward my master, but hath guided me in the straight way toward the house of my master's brother."

Meanwhile Rebekah had run home, and told the whole house what had happened. She had a

brother called Laban, a man who dearly loved the sight of gold. When he heard Rebekah's words, and saw the ring and the bracelets upon her hands, he ran to Eliezer, as he still lingered with his camels round the well, and said, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord! Why remainest thou here outside the gate? For I have set the house in order, and prepared room for the camels also." And he brought him to the house, and ungirded his camels. Then he fetched him water to wash his own feet and the feet of his attendants: and he set meat before him, and provided straw and food for the camels as well. But Eliezer would not eat until he had told his errand. So he related the full story of his adventures since Abraham had sent him to get a bride for Isaac, and asked them to tell him plainly whether they would show his master "loving-kindness and truth" in sending Rebekah back with him. Then Laban and his father Bethuel answered and said, "The thing cometh from the Lord; we cannot say yes or no. Behold! Rebekah is before thee. Take her, and go, that she may be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken." And Eliezer bowed himself with his face to the earth before the Lord. Then he opened his baggage, and brought out ornaments of gold and silver, with many fine clothes, as a present for Rebekah. He gave Laban and his mother also gifts of various "precious things." And he and his men ate and drank with them, and stayed in the house all night.

In the morning Eliezer rose up early, and asked to be sent home at once to his master. Laban and his mother begged that Rebekah be allowed to remain at least ten days with them. But Eliezer said to them, "Hinder me not, seeing that the Lord hath prospered my journey." So they laid the matter before Rebekah herself, and said, "Wilt thou go with this man?" And she said, "I will go." And they sent her away, with Deborah her nurse, and blessed her as she went. Joyfully then Eliezer marched homeward, and in due time reached Beer-lahai-roi, "the Well of the Living One that seeth me," where Isaac was then encamped. A quiet, thoughtful man, he had gone out to the fields to meditate in the cool of the evening, when he lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold! there were camels coming. He did not know yet that the camels were his own, still less did he know of Rebekah. But she had caught sight of him, and asked who he was. When she heard he was Isaac, she alighted from her camel, veiled herself as Eastern etiquette demanded, and went to meet him. With a glad heart Isaac welcomed her. Then he brought her into his tent, and she became his wife. And he loved her, and was comforted in her after his mother's death.

We all wish to be loved as Rebekah was. If so, we must have a spirit like hers. It is not enough to be beautiful. It is not even enough to be good. There are many good people who are far from lovable. Like Aunt Mirandy, in Mrs. Wiggin's delightful Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, they are "turrible hard to get along with, an' kind o' heave benefits at your head same 's they would bricks." To be loved, we must have grace as well as goodness. We must be open-hearted, cheerful, kindly, ready to help our neighbours in their needs, and

to do it with shining face and lightsome step. The girl or woman with a disposition like this cannot fail to be loved.

"She is a woman to love, to love
As maid or wife,
And all of her that is sweet and true—
Which is all of her—she will give to you,
To perfect life.

You cannot help but love, but love, Nobody can. She carries a charm with her everywhere: In her gait in her glance, in her voice, in her hair, Bewitching man.

Hear her laugh, as the children play,
See her bring
Light to the eyes of the old and weak;
And oh how wisely her lips can speak
As well as sing!

That is a woman to love, to love,
And to wonder at,
For whether she talks or walks, or rides,
'Tis as if she had never done aught besides
But perfect that.

W. C. SMITH.

XXI

OLD WELLS OPENED AGAIN

A BRAHAM saw his plans for Isaac blessed of the Lord. He could now depart in peace. "Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, and was gathered to his people." His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him beside Sarah in the cave of Machpelah. Their lives had lain apart since the day when Ishmael and his mother had been sent from the camp at Hebron, Ishmael had been a hunter in the wilderness, while Isaac tended his cattle in the pastures round Beersheba. For a moment they clasped hands over their father's bier. Then they separated again, Ishmael returning to his game; and Isaac to his flocks and herds.

Isaac's life is but a feeble echo of his father's. Almost all we read of him is that he occupied Abraham's camping-grounds, that he built an altar, "and called upon the name of the Lord," as Abraham had done; that he forgot the Lord and sinned, as he had sinned, and that "he digged again the wells of water which his father's servants had digged, but the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth," after the death of Abraham.

In all this record there is nothing very heroic. Yet the picture is one of a good and useful life. Isaac kept up the traditions that had made his

father great. He was diligent in his business. He looked to the welfare of his household and his cattle. He turned the desert into fruitful soil by opening up the old wells. He maintained the purity of the home. Above all, he was true to his father's faith, and handed it down with light undimmed to his children. So the Lord blessed him, as He had blessed Abraham. "Isaac sowed, and reaped that same year an hundredfold. And he grew richer and richer, until he was very rich. And he had great possessions of flocks and herds, and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him."

Few of us can be bold and original characters like Abraham. We must be content to move in the common planes of life. Perhaps we have to follow our fathers' footsteps as closely as Isaac did, to succeed them in business, and to inherit their home and goods. If so, we must be careful to keep the old wells flowing. We must work as earnestly as our fathers did. We must love and honour home as they did. Above all, we must stand fast by our fathers' faith. "Trust in God, and do the right." And He will bless you wherever your lot be cast.

"Is your place a small place?

Tend it with care!—

He set you there.

Is your place a large place?
Guard it with care!—
He set you there.

Whate'er your place, it is Not yours alone, but His Who set you there.''

JOHN OXENHAM.

ΠXX

THE SALE OF A BIRTHRIGHT

LIKE their parents, Isaac and Rebekah had many years to wait before children came to them. At last twin sons, Esau and Jacob, were born. Esau was a rough, shaggy boy, who loved the open air, while Jacob was a soft, delicate child, who preferred to stay in the tent. As they grew up, Esau became a hunter like his uncle Ishmael, while Jacob attended to the cattle with his father. Their characters were as different as their callings. Esau was a big, warm-hearted, frank and generous fellow, the very type of a gallant sportsman, fond of good company, and popular with everyone. Jacob was quiet and reserved, cold in manner, deep and crafty, with a furtive look in his eye that led men to distrust him. Jacob was, in fact, a born schemer, who would stick at nothing to carry through his schemes. Yet there were elements of real greatness in him. Esau was only what he appeared on the surface. As the Apostle says, he was a "profane man"; that is, a mere worldling, with no regard for God or things eternal. But Jacob had from the beginning a true sense of the value of life. He was ambitious to excel, he had strength of mind and purpose enough to follow out his ambitions, and he had patience to wait for success. Among his chief ambitions

was to stand high in the kingdom of God. He knew that in his family lay the line of royal descent. And he was eager to be a link in the chain, to take his place with Abraham and Isaac among the fathers of the faithful.

The ambition was quite honourable. But the means he took were wrong. As the elder son, Esau was entitled to be his father's heir. Jacob felt he could reach his ambition in no other way than by winning over the birthright to himself. So he plotted to oust his brother. The chance came one day when Esau returned home faint with hunger from the chase. Jacob was cooking some lentil pottage. Seeing the savoury mess. Esau blurted out: "Hallo! let me swallow down some of that red stuff! for I am faint." Jacob quietly answered: "Yes! if you first sell me your birthright." With a coarse laugh Esau disposed of the matter. "Behold! I am at the point of death: so what is the use of the birthright to me?" To clinch the bargain Jacob asked him to swear an oath to him. Just as carelessly he swore the oath. Then Jacob gave him pottage and bread; and he ate and drank, rose up, and went his way. "Thus Esau despised his birthright."

We cannot too strongly condemn the trick by which Jacob secured the inheritance. But the Bible condemns Esau's conduct still more strongly. His was no ordinary birthright. He was heir to all the great and precious promises of God. He ought also to have been the ancestor of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. But this he threw away for a mess of pottage! Not that he really intended to part with his birthright.

The day came when he bitterly regretted his foolish bargain. It was his rooted worldliness of mind that played him false. Like the Man with the Muck-rake in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, he could not lift up his eyes to the angel holding the celestial crown over his head, "but raked to himself the straws, the small sticks, and dust of the floor."

Many are still throwing away their birthright for trifles as light as these. The boy at school wastes the precious hours in idleness. The young man loses his chance of success through excessive love of amusement. The heir to a princely fortune squanders it in frivolity and vice. The possessor of brilliant gifts degrades himself and them by intemperence. The prodigal exchanges the joys of his Father's home for "the husks that the swine eat." While we avoid Jacob's meanness, therefore, we should take to heart his ambition to succeed in life, his spirit of steadfast purpose and resolution, his willingness to climb the ladder step by step, his patience in biding his time. Above all, we should imitate him in his desire for a high place in the kingdom of God. For he that stands high with God reaches also the best in life.

P. J. BAILEY.

[&]quot;We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths; In feelings, not in figures on a dial.

We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

XXIII

THE STOLEN BLESSING

ISAAC'S life went on in the same narrow groove. At last he became old and blind. Feeling that his end was near, he called his son Esau to him, and bade him take his bow and arrows, go to the field, and get him some venison, make it into savoury meat, such as he loved, and bring it to him, that he might eat, and then bless him before he died. In obedience to his father's wish, Esau set out to the field to hunt for venison. But Rebekah had overheard Isaac's words. So she called Jacob, who was her favourite, and bade him go to the flock, and bring two young kids. which she would make into savoury meat for his father, that he might receive the blessing instead of Esau. Jacob did as his mother told him. Then Rebekah made savoury meat, such as Isaac loved, and placed it in Jacob's hand, with some bread and wine which she had prepared. And she clothed him in fine raiment that belonged to Esau, covered his smooth neck and hands with the skins of the goats, and sent him to his father.

Isaac was surprised that his son had returned so speedily with the venison. But Jacob assured him that God had brought it to him. Then the old man asked him to come near, that he might feel him, and find out whether he was his very son Esau or not. "And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, 'The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." Then he bade him bring the venison, that he might eat it. And Jacob brought the venison, and the bread and wine that Rebekah had prepared. And Isaac ate and drank. Then he bade his son come near, that he might kiss him. And he came near, and Isaac kissed him. And he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, saying:

"Lo! the smell of my son
Is as the smell of a field
That the Lord hath blessed.
God give thee of the dew of heaven,
And of the fat things of the earth,
Even plenty of corn and wine!

Let peoples serve thee,
And nations bow down to thee;
Be lord over thy brethren,
And let thy mother's sons bow down to thee.
Cursed be everyone that curseth thee,
And blessed be everyone that blesseth thee!"

When Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was scarcely gone from his father's presence, Esau came back from his hunting. He also had made savoury meat, and he brought it to his father, and said, "Let my father rise up, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me!" When Isaac heard his voice, he said, "Who art thou?" And Esau answered gaily, "I am thy son, thy firstborn, Esau." And Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who then is he

that hath taken venison, and brought it to me, so that I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him?" And with deep emotion he added, 'Yea, and he shall be blessed.' Then Esau cried out with an exceeding great and bitter cry, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" But Isaac answered, "Thy brother came with subtlety, and hath taken away the blessing." And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Supplanter? for he hath supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright; and behold! now he hath taken away my blessing." And he pleaded with his father, and said, "Hast thou not kept a blessing for me?" But Isaac answered and said, "Behold! I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants, and with corn and wine have I provided him: so what can I do now for thee, my son?" And Esau said to his father, "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father!" And the great, strong man lifted up his voice, and wept. Isaac was touched to the heart by his piteous cries, but all he had for him was the mockery of a blessing:

"Far from the fat things of the earth shall be thy dwelling,

Far from the dew of heaven above. By thy sword shalt thou live, And thou shalt serve thy brother. Only when thou breakest loose, Shalt thou shake his yoke from thy neck."

Again we cannot too strongly condemn the cruel deceit by which Jacob robbed his brother of the

blessing. Yet Esau was reaping as he had sown. He had despised the birthright; and now he lost the blessing. Even had Jacob acted fairly, God must have kept it back from him. Esau found "no place of repentance." But even repentance cannot undo the past. The idle schoolboy may become a scholar, but he cannot make good the opportunities he has lost. The young man who squanders his inheritance may win an honourable position in the world, but he cannot reclaim the wealth he has wasted. The drunkard may be saved, but he cannot bring back his ruined health. The prodigal may return to his Father, but he cannot wipe out the memory of the years he has spent among the husks.

"God pity them both! and pity us all,
Who fondly the dreams of youth recall.
For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: 'It might have been.'"
WHITTEE

XXIV

A HILLSIDE DREAM

E SAU was so angry with Jacob that he made up his mind to slay him as soon as his father was dead. But Rebekah learned of his plan, and advised Jacob to flee to Haran, and remain a short time with Laban her brother, until Esau's fury should have passed away. Then she went to Isaac and persuaded him to fall in with her scheme. Esau had married two Hittite women, who were a sore grief to both his parents. So she said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of these Hittite women. If Jacob take to wife another of the daughters of the land, such as they are, what good shall my life be to me?" Then Isaac called Jacob to him, and blessed him, and charged him, saving, "Thou shall not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father, and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. And God Almighty bless thee, and give thee the blessing of Abraham, thyself and thy seed with thee, that thou mayest inherit the land of thy sojournings, which God gave unto Abraham!" Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went toward Paddanaram, the home of Bethuel, his mother's father.

On the second or third night of his wanderings he reached the hillside of Luz, where Abraham

had built an altar. It was as dreary a spot as one could imagine. Great crags and boulders dotted the landscape. Over these led the path which Jacob must take, looking like a giant staircase linking earth and heaven. Wearied with his journey, he took one of the stones of the place, put it under his head for a pillow, and lay down to sleep. I suppose life had never worn so desolate an aspect for Jacob as on that night at Luz. Home and friends far away. God he believed as far away, conscience his accuser, and the future dark and ominous. But as he slept, he dreamed, and behold! the terraced steeps of the hillside piled themselves into a ladder reaching from earth to heaven. And behold! the angels of God ascended and descended on it. And behold! the Lord stood beside him, and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. The land on which thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold! I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Like Jacob, we often imagine God to be confined to sacred places like the Church and the family altar. Then suddenly we awake to the fact that He is with us everywhere. The poet Wordsworth, in his Reverie of Poor Susan, tells

of a city outcast hearing the song of a thrush at the corner of one of London's busy thoroughfares. As she listens, she sees in her mind's eve the trees and birds of her native glen, the fields on which she gathered the wild-flowers, the path along which she tripped with her pail, and the cottage where she spent so many years of childish innocence with father and mother. "She looks, and her heart is in heaven." To her that crowded street was the very house of God. The vision may come to us also amid the bustle of the city, or on some lonely moor or desolate hillside like Luz, or perhaps as we wander in the fields as Isaac did, or under the starry skies, or beside the dancing waters. And from that moment we begin, like Wordsworth, to see God wherever we go, in "the light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air, and the blue sky, and in the mind of man."

No one ever had such a sense of God's nearness as Jesus. To Him all Nature was the Father's house, with its many mansions. The blue sky was the roof, and the warm brown earth the floor. The mountains were the walls, the trees and valleys the pictures, and the grass and flowers the carpets. The rooms were thronged with ministering angels, and the Father Himself walked freely through the midst of them, loving and blessing His children. If we learn of Jesus, we, too, shall find this world to be a temple of God, alive with heavenly presences. Then we shall be as sure as the Apostle that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor

depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

> "The green earth sends her incense up From many a thousand shrine; From folded leaf and dewy cup She pours her sacred wine.

The winds with hymns of praise are loud, Or low with sobs of pain, The thunder-organ of the cloud, The dropping tears of rain.

The blue sky is the temple's arch,
Its transept earth and air,
The music of its starry march
The chorus of a prayer.

So Nature keeps the reverent frame With which her years began, And all her signs and voices shame The prayerless heart of man."

WHITTIER.

XXV

STEPPING OUT

M ORNING came, and the dream faded away. There, indeed, rose the rugged heights of Luz, still towering up like a ladder reaching from earth to heaven. But no more vision of angels ascending and descending on it, no more words from heaven to cheer the homeless wanderer! The landscape was as cold and bleak as yesterday, the facts of life as hard and stern, the future as uncertain. But look more closely on the figure of Jacob as he girds his loins afresh for the journey, and you will see a new light in his eye, a new spring in his step, a new vigour and zest in all his movements.

Jacob awoke from his sleep, and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, although I knew it not. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Then he took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon it, and called the name of the place Bethel, "the house of God." And he vowed a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me on this journey that I am going, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God, and this stone which I have set up for

a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee."

Then Jacob lifted up his feet, or "stepped out," a phrase that vividly suggests the eager, resolute march of a man with a purpose. The vision, indeed, was gone. But the memory of it was stamped for ever upon his mind. The God of Bethel was with him still. And His presence shed light over the whole face of Nature and life. The roughest roads, the most wearisome toils, were bathed in the atmosphere of His love. And, whatever the future might give or withhold, Jacob knew it could not separate him from the God who had made His face to shine upon him at Bethel. "And behold! I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest." This promise was the lodestar that guided him in all his ways. Inspired by its gladdening beams, he stepped out cheerfully, to brave the hardships of the desert, and to face his fortune as it came to him, as one who had seen the vision.

If we once realise that this world is our Father's house, and that He is with us "whithersoever we go," we, too, shall step out on our journey with brave, glad hearts. We shall go to school with a song on our lips. We shall do our lessons thoroughly. We shall fling ourselves with equal zest into our games. We shall be good friends to all our playmates. We shall be the light and life of our homes. And in later years, when we must choose a path for ourselves, we shall still step out with courage and cheerfulness. Whether that path leads through the green pastures and beside

the still waters, or over the rough places and the hills of difficulty, or through the dark valleys and the deep waters, we shall march breast-forward, assured that God will bring us out to the sunny plains of righteousness and peace.

> "Not enjoyment, and not sorrow, Is our destined end or way; But to act, that each to-morrow Find us farther than to-day.

Let us, then, be up and doing, With a heart for any fate; Still achieving, still pursuing, Learn to labour and to wait."

LONGFELLOW.

XXVI

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

WITH quickened steps Jacob went on his way till he reached Haran, the city of Bethuel, his mother's father. Some little distance from the city he came to a well in the field, with a great stone covering the well. It was still early in the afternoon, but three flocks of sheep were already lying near at hand, waiting their turn to be watered when the stone should be rolled away. Jacob entered into conversation with the shepherds, and asked them whence they came, and whether they knew Laban the grandson of Nahor. The shepherds answered, "Yes, we know him." Then Jacob asked, "Is he well?" And the shepherds answered, "He is well: and behold! Rachel his daughter is just coming with the sheep."

Jacob was surprised that the shepherds should be sitting so long idly at the well. So he advised them to water their flocks at once, and lead them back to their pastures. But the shepherds answered that it was not the custom of the place to begin watering the sheep till all were gathered. While they were yet talking, Rachel arrived with her father's flock. As soon as he saw her, Jacob went himself to the well's mouth, rolled away the stone, and watered her flock. "Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept." It

was love at first sight.

"He looked at her, as a lover can; She looked at him, as one who awakes: The past was a sleep, and her life began."

Love is the sweetest of earthly blessings. It is that which draws us closest to the heart of the Father. But too often it is poisoned by selfishness, and the poetry of the well passes into the prose of the fireside. If we are to keep the springs of love pure and undefiled, we must dig deep into the love of God, the living fountain of all love. We must love one another as He has loved us.

"Life is only bright when it proceedeth
Towards a truer, deeper Life above;
Human Love is sweetest when it leadeth
To a more divine and perfect Love."
A. A. PROCTER.

XXVII

CHANGED LOOKS

HER heart aglow with love, Rachel ran home, and told her father Laban of her meeting with Jacob at the well. Jacob soon followed her, and Laban ran to meet him, embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. For a full month Jacob stayed with Laban, helping him with his cattle, and seeking no other reward than his love for Rachel. Then Laban said to Jacob, "Though thou art my kinsman, oughtest thou therefore to serve me for nought? Tell me, what shall thy wages be?" And Jacob answered. "I will serve thee seven years for Rachel, thy younger daughter." Laban was glad to have Jacob's services on these terms. "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed to him but a few days, for the love he bore to her." He felt like Ferdinand in Shakespeare's Tempest:

"This my task
Would be as heavy to me as odious; but
The mistress whom I serve quickens what's dead,
And makes my labours pleasures."

But Jacob was now to find that in Laban he had met a man as keen, grasping, and crafty as himself. When the time came for him to receive Rachel as his wife, Laban trapped him into marry-

ing her elder sister Leah, on the ground that it was not the custom of the place "to give the younger before the firstborn." But he was willing to give him Rachel also, if he would serve other seven years. So Jacob served other seven years for Rachel. But the double marriage was the source of endless heart-burning. Rachel was "fair of form and fair of face," while Leah had weak, pale eyes. Jacob loved Rachel, and cared nothing for Leah. But Leah was a happy mother of children, while Rachel had to wait for hers almost as long as her aunt Rebekah. So Rachel envied Leah her children, while Leah envied Rachel her husband's love. When at last Joseph was born to Rachel, he became his father's favourite son, and this added to the bickerings. So the household of Jacob was torn into rival camps, full of mutual jealousies and strifes.

Out in the fields, too, it was "diamond cut diamond." When Laban found how good a servant Jacob was, he proposed that he should stay on for wages. Jacob asked only for the black lambs and the "speckled and spotted" goats. But he contrived that the stronger animals should be his. and the feebler ones Laban's. When Laban saw how Jacob prospered, he changed his terms; but Jacob once more outwitted him, so that "he increased exceedingly, and acquired large flocks of sheep and goats, camels and asses," with many maidservants and menservants. Then Laban's sons began to grumble that Jacob was taking away all the wealth that belonged to their father. And Jacob saw that Laban's own face was "not toward him as aforetime." So long as Jacob

served merely for love, it was all smiles. But when the tables were turned, and good fortune passed from him to Jacob, his looks changed, and his face grew sour and surly." Thus the old

friendship withered and died.

In his fairy tale, The Snow Queen, Hans Andersen tells of a magic mirror, the broken pieces of which get into people's eyes, and make them see nothing but what is mean and ugly, so that their hearts become as lumps of ice, and their faces hard and cruel. The magic mirror is jealousy. Once we grow jealous of our friends, we see nothing but what is mean and ugly in them. All the kindness in our hearts freezes up, and our faces become stiff and harsh. How unpleasant it is when a spirit like this enters school or club! How much more unpleasant when it enters the home! The only way to avoid it is to let love have free course in our hearts. Love keeps the heart warm, and the face bright. Love at school makes it like a sunny garden. And love at home makes it a heaven on earth.

Again we must remember that God is the source of all love. Had Jacob been more mindful of the God of Bethel, he would not have allowed his home to become a hotbed of strife. As little would he have tried to outwit Laban in the fields. Instead of that, he would have met his wiles by openness and honesty. In this way he would have been no less successful. God would still have blessed him with prosperity, and He would have prospered Laban along with him. Thus work would have brought both of them satisfaction and delight. If we wish to be happy in our homes and in our

work, we must let the heavenly vision guide us in all that we do. For it is only in the paths of duty that the blessing of Bethel comes to us.

> "I slept and dreamt that life was beauty; I waked and found that life was duty. Dreams grow holy put in action, Work grows fair through starry dreaming; But where each flows on unmingling, Both are fruitless and in vain."

> > A. A. PROCTER.

XXVIII

MEETING WITH ANGELS

J ACOB saw he could no longer live in peace with Laban. So he called his wives Leah and Rachel, told them how their father's face was altered toward him, and asked them to return with him to Palestine. Both of them were as anxious as he to depart from Haran. For they had long felt that they were counted as aliens in their father's house. It chanced that Laban had gone to shear his sheep. So Jacob rose up, set his wives and children on camels, and gathered together his cattle, and all the other substance he had gotten in Paddan-aram, and stole away from Haran. Rachel also took with her the teraphim, or household gods, which belonged to her father. Soon they crossed the Euphrates, and set their faces in the direction of Mount Gilead.

On the third day after their departure, it was told Laban that Jacob had fled. So he took his clansmen with him, pursued the fugitives for seven days, and overtook them in Gilead. Laban had intended to bring them back by force, but God appeared to him in a dream by night, saying, "Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad." So he complained only that Jacob had stolen away unawares, and given him no opportunity to kiss his daughters and their chil-

dren, and to speed them on their journey "with mirth and with songs, with timbrel and with harp." He charged him also with having carried off his gods. Jacob said he had gone thus secretly because he feared Laban would attempt to keep his daughters from him. As to the teraphim, he bade him search the camp, and put to death the man in whose hand they should be found. "For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them." Laban searched, but found not the teraphim; for Rachel had hidden them in the camel's basket, and sat on the top of it. So Jacob hotly rebuked him for his suspicions, and reminded him of all he had done for himself and his flocks during the twenty years of his stay in Haran. To this Laban had not a word to answer. So he proposed that they should make a covenant with one another. They gathered stones, therefore, and built them into a cairn. Then they sat down beside the cairn, and ate and drank together. Thus they established their covenant. And Laban called the name of the place Mizpah, or Watchtower, for he said, "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another."

At Laban's request Jacob swore a solemn oath before the Lord that he would do no wrong to Leah and Rachel. Then he offered a sacrifice at Mizpah, and ate the bread of the sacrifice with his companions. That night Laban and he stayed together on the mountain. Then early in the morning Laban rose up, kissed his daughters and their children, blessed them, and returned on his way toward Haran. Jacob also went his way. But he had not gone far when a host of angels

met him. On seeing them, Jacob said, "This is God's camp." So he called the name of the place Mahanaim, "Two camps." For there God's

camp had joined itself to his.

We may no longer meet with white-robed companies of angels crossing our path. But if our eyes are opened like those of the young man of Dothan, we shall see angelic figures encompassing us on every side. To the Psalmist, the clouds and the tempest, the thunder and the lightning, the fire and the heat, were God's angels. So also the modern poet, William Blake, could say: "When the sun rises, I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!" But not only is the sky about us teeming with angelic presences. We may find them in our homes, in our friendships, even in "the trivial round, the common task." A little child is an angel from heaven sent to bless the home. The nurse in the hospital is a ministering angel. Every good man or woman is an angel. As Whittier sings, "I saw the angel where they saw a man." In another of his poems he speaks of the two angels, Pity and Love, who drop "tears like rain" and "smiles like sunshine" on saddened hearts. Adelaide Proctor has her angels of Joy and of Goodness, of Faith and of Prayer, of Pain and of Death. The angel of Joy bears "radiant gifts" of love on his "glittering rainbow wings"; the angel of Goodness brings food, rest and comfort to the poor; the angels of Faith and Prayer lift their sorrows to the Father's heart; and even the angels of Pain and Death come with healing in their wings "to help and to save."

Angels ministered to Jesus after He was tempted, and strengthened Him during His agony in the Garden. Lazarus was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. And still "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." The postscript of the last letter which General Gordon wrote from Khartoum ends with the words, "The hosts are with me—Mahanaim." Though surrounded by enemies, and with no hope of relief, he yet felt that the angels of God were about him, and that no real harm could overtake him. And soon afterwards, when he fell before the sword of the Mahdi, the angels carried him, as they had carried Lazarus, to the heavenly home.

XXIX

WRESTLING WITH GOD

TACOB was much cheered by his meeting with the angels. And certainly he needed all the cheering he could find. A few miles south of him, beyond the brawling torrent of the Jabbok, his brother Esau was encamped. He had just sent messengers to tell him of his coming, and they had returned, saying, "We went to thy brother Esau, and behold! he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him." At this news Jacob was greatly alarmed and distressed. So he flung himself on his knees, and praved to the God of his fathers Abraham and Isaac to deliver him from the hand of Esau, for he feared he might come and smite both him and his household, "the mother with the children." But while he thus cast himself on God's protection, he did not forget his old cunning. So he divided his camp into two, saying, "If Esau come to the one camp, and smite it, the camp which is left shall escape." Next morning he set aside a portion of his sheep and cattle as a gift for Esau, sending them forward drove by drove, with a clear space between each. And he commanded the leaders of the various droves, as they met Esau, to say to him, "This belongeth to thy servant Jacob; it is a gift he hath sent to my lord Esau: and behold!

he himself is just behind us." In this way he hoped little by little to break down Esau's anger,

so that he might see his face in peace.

All day the strange procession went on crossing the Jabbok. When night fell, there remained only Jacob, his wives, and his children. So he sent them over the stream. "And Jacob was left alone." As he prepared to follow, an unknown Wrestler stepped out from the darkness, and grappled with him. Hour after hour they fought, neither yielding, neither winning, till the day was about to break. Then the Wrestler touched the socket of Jacob's thigh, and put it out of joint. And He said to him, "Let me go now, for dawn has come!" But Jacob saw by this time that he was contending with no human foe, and he said, "I will not let Thee go, unless Thou bless me." Then the Wrestler asked him, "What is thy name?" And he answered, "Jacob." And He said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob. the Supplanter, but Israel, the Prince of God: for thou has striven with God, as aforetime thou didst strive with men, and thou has overcome." Then Jacob said to Him, "Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name!" The Wrestler rebuked him for making such a request. "Why is it that thou dost ask after my name?" But He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, "the face of God"; for he said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

I think we can dimly understand the meaning of this weird struggle. Jacob was returning to claim his inheritance in Palestine. But he was still the same old Jacob. It is true, he had seen the vision of God at Bethel. He had learned also to pray in times of difficulty and danger. Yet he trusted far more in his own crafty schemes than in God's guidance. He was preparing now to leap across the Jabbok, and win his way to his brother's heart by stealth. But God could not allow a trickster like Jacob to inherit the promised land. So He checked him in the middle of his headstrong career, brought him quivering in pain to the ground, and showed him how weak and helpless he was.

An old poet says:

"It is not but the tempest that doth show
The seaman's cunning; but the field that tries
The captain's courage; and we come to know
Best what men are in their worst jeopardies."

It was in this worst jeopardy of his that Jacob's true character came to light. All these years there had been two natures in him struggling for the mastery: the mean and treacherous Jacob and the heroic, aspiring Israel. Till now the Israel had lain crushed and beaten. But at Peniel the Jacob died, and the Israel sprang into victorious life. In his weakness and pain he clung to the God who had put His hand on him, and would not let Him go until He blessed him. Thus he became strong enough to overcome God, and pure enough to see His face and live.

Often God checks us as he checked Jacob. We are bent on some foolish enterprise, or we are trying to succeed by trickery and deceit. And He pulls us up at the water's edge. Perhaps He blocks the way so completely that we cannot go

on. Perhaps He sends us sickness and sorrow. When we are thus brought low, we are inclined to chafe and complain. But God checks us only to draw out our full strength. Like a good doctor, He hurts only to heal. He frees us from self-ishness, and makes us pure and good.

"Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the pain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the three!"

ROBERT BROWNING.

XXX

BACK TO BETHEL

THE sun rose as Jacob passed over Peniel, and went limping on his thigh to join his company. No sooner had he reached them than "he lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold! Esau came, and four hundred men with him." But there was no longer any selfish regard for his own safety. Putting his household behind him, with Rachel and Joseph in the rear, Jacob went forward, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. Esan met his advance with the utmost chivalry. The last time he set eyes on Jacob, he had vowed to slav him. now all his anger was gone, and his generous heart was big with brotherly love. "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept." With the same gracious courtesy he welcomed the women and children, inviting them all to stay with him in Seir, and offering himself as an escort. Nor would he take any of Jacob's gifts until he entreated him. "If now I have found grace in thy sight, I pray thee, accept this gift from my hand, for asmuch as I have seen thy face as one seeth the face of God." Thus Jacob learned that, when the heart is right with God, it is right also with men.

Esau returned that day to Seir, but Jacob went

no further than Succoth, a mile or two west of Peniel. There he built him a house, and made huts for his cattle. But the lure of Palestine was on him. So he crossed the Jordan, and made his way to Shechem, where his grandfather Abraham had once encamped. It was one of the sweetest spots in Palestine, a valley watered by springs in every direction, rich with corn and grass, and gay with vineyards and gardens. But the people of Shechem were heathen, and Jacob's family began to learn their ways. So Jacob heard a voice from heaven calling him to go back to Bethel, and there consecrate himself and them afresh to the God who had blessed them so abundantly, even when they had forgotten Him times without number.

We can imagine the feelings with which Jacob approached Bethel. Twenty years ago he had toiled along that weary road, a lonely outcast, burdened with a load of shameful memories. But as he slept, God had opened the gates of heaven, and spoken to him words of wonderful comfort. Ever since then He had been faithful to His promise. He had made everything to prosper under his hands. He had given him the heart of the woman he loved. He had blessed him with home and children, He had kept him in all his ways, and now He had brought him back to his father's house in peace. But how unfaithful to the covenant he had been! As he retraced his steps that day, he would recall with bitter pain "the broken vow, the frequent fall," the sordid story of his dealings with Laban, the sins of his children, the idolatry of his beloved Rachel. When he was leaving Shechem, he bade his household put away the strange gods that were among them, purify themselves, and change their garments, and accompany him to Bethel. And they gave him their idols and charms, and he buried them under an oak near Shechem. And they purified themselves, and changed their garments, and went with him. So when they reached Bethel, he built an altar, and renewed his vows to the God who had answered him in the day of his distress, and had been with him on the way which he went. And the God of Bethel blessed him and his family, and sent them forth rejoicing, to live a truer and nobler life.

It is with the same emotion that we revisit the Bethels where God has come near to us, the old home where our parents taught us to lisp His name in prayer, and the mountain, moor, or field where His light first shone upon our path. As we gaze upon these sacred scenes, we think of God's unceasing goodness, and of our own faults and failings. And we lift up our hearts to Him, committing our lives anew to His keeping, and asking for strength to be more worthy of His goodness. But the Bethel to which we return most often is the Church where we worship. How many hallowed memories cluster round its walls! There our fathers met with God. There many of them rest from their labours. There we were brought to Him in baptism. There we have found peace. and joy, and strength, and hope. There we have buried our idols, and there paid our vows to the Lord our God. There He has blessed us, and there He will bless us to the end. For God will

not forsake those who love His name and His house.

"O God of Bethel! by whose hand Thy people still are fed; Who through this weary pilgrimage Hast all our fathers led:

Our vows, our prayers, we now present Before Thy throne of grace; God of our fathers! be the God Of their succeeding race.

Through each perplexing path of life Our wandering footsteps guide; Give us each day our daily bread, And raiment fit provide.

O spread Thy covering wings around, Till all our wanderings cease, And at our Father's loved abode Our souls arrive in peace.

Such blessings from Thy gracious hand Our humble prayers implore; And Thou shalt be our chosen God, And portion evermore."

XXXI

THE GENTLEMAN'S COAT

THE blessing at Bethel did not shield Jacob from sorrow. His mother Rebekah had died some time before, and now her old nurse Deborah passed away, and was buried under the Oak of Weeping at Bethel. Soon a worse grief befell him. As they journeyed from Bethel to Ephrath, his wife Rachel died when a second son was born to her. With her last breath she called the child Benoni, "the son of my sorrow." Though his own heart was breaking, Jacob changed the name to Benjamin, "the son of the right hand"; that is, the strong, helpful boy. Then he buried Rachel on the spot where she died, and set up a pillar on the grave, to keep her in lasting remembrance.

Ere long Isaac died at Hebron, and Jacob and Esau buried him beside Rebekah in the cave of Machpelah. Jacob's affections were now more than ever twined round Joseph, the elder son of Rachel. He was a boy well worthy of his love. He inherited in full measure his own best gifts; his keen intellect, his eagerness of spirit, and his strength of will and purpose. With these qualities he combined his mother's beauty and grace of person, her bright, winning disposition, and her charming manners. But what raised him most highly above his brothers was his purity of heart.

They were coarse, rough men, like most of the shepherds with whom they mingled. But from his earliest years he was the soul of purity. As the needle to the magnet, he turned instinctively to God and goodness.

It was only natural that Jacob should have "loved Joseph more than all his children." He did wrong, however, in showing his favouritism so plainly. He made him, we read, "a long robe with sleeves." This was the gentleman's dress of the time, corresponding to our silk hat and frock coat. Joseph's brothers had to wear short plain tunics which would not spoil with work. In giving him the long sleeved robe, Jacob meant to single him out as "the young gentleman of the family," who should pass his days untouched by the dust of toil and the struggles of common life.

Though it was intended as kindness, Jacob was not merely sowing the seeds of deadly hatred and strife in the home, but he was taking the surest means of ruining Joseph's own character. We can already trace the germs of priggishness working in the boy. He became too conscious of his superior powers. He began also to tell tales of his brothers' evil doings. Had he been left to himself, he might have grown up a dandy, unfit for work, and eaten up by a false sense of his own importance.

We see examples of this all about us. Fathers who have won their way to success by hard toil and self-denial bring up their children in idleness. Boys try to ape the young gentleman by their fine clothes and foppish ways. But nothing can be more fatal. It is not idleness and fine clothes

that make the gentleman, but "clean hands and a pure heart." There never was a truer gentleman than Abraham Lincoln. His figure and dress were uncouth; but his heart was a very temple of honour and courtesy. The Christian gentleman, young or old, has his affections set on things above. But he does not air his superiority over others. Nor is he afraid to soil his fingers by honest work. He is neither a prig nor a coxcomb. Like Tom Brown at school, he speaks up, and strikes out if necessary, "for whatever is true, and manly, and lovely, and of good report"; but he does not look down on his fellows in stupid conceit of himself and his virtues. Nor does he shirk his tasks. He tries "to do his duty, and to help others to do theirs." To the best of his ability, he lives in the spirit of Wordsworth's noble sonnet to Milton:

"Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea.
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay."

XXXII

A BOY'S DREAMS

JOSEPH was saved from the worst effects of his father's indulgence by his own ambition. As a young lad, he began to have his dreams of coming glory. One night he dreamed that he and his brothers were binding sheaves in the field, and behold! his sheaf arose, and stood upright, while his brothers' sheaves came round about, and made obeisance to his sheaf. Soon his dreams took a higher flight. He dreamed that he was one of the stars of heaven, and behold! the sun and moon and the eleven other stars made obeisance to him.

The meaning of the dreams was clear, and Joseph's father and brothers understood it at once. He was to rise above them all! It was, no doubt, foolish of Joseph to tell them of his dreams. But the youth who "hitches his wagon to a star" is on the way to success. He may not reach the stars, but he will certainly shoot far higher than he who aims at nothing beyond the

ground.

Like Joseph, every true boy has his dreams. Very early in life he begins to take an interest in farming, or engines, or books, or paintings. And he is ambitious for success. This is right and proper. God has given us our talents, and He wishes us to make the best possible use of them.

Yet our ambitions should reach beyond mere personal success. We should have a star to guide us. This star may be love of parents and friends, love of country, love of man. The boy whose parents have done much for him should seek to make their old age peaceful and happy. He who has enjoyed the love of friends should remember them in the day of his prosperity. And all of us should be loyal to the claims of country and humanity. You remember Burns' fine ambition:

"I mind it weel in early date,
When I was beardless, young, and blate,
An' first could thresh the barn,
E'en then a wish (I mind its pow'r),
A wish that to my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast,
That I for poor auld Scotland's sake
Some usefu' plan or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least."

It was the same ambition that stirred the heart of the Italian patriots, Mazzini and Garibaldi, when they dreamed day and night of freeing their country from the Austrians, of Lincoln, when he determined to strike the deathblow at slavery, and of Gladstone, when he girded on his armour "to force good causes forward." We may not be able to sing, or fight, or govern, as they did. But if our heart be set on doing good to others, we shall find opportunities that now we may not even conceive of. Only we must have a fixed star, round which all our other ambitions turn. This fixed star is Christ, the centre of light and life.

"What can a little chap do
For his country and for you?
What can a little chap do?

He can fight like a Knight

For the Truth and the Right—

That's one good thing he can do.

He can shun all that's mean,
He can keep himself clean,
Both without and within—
That's another good thing he can do.

His soul he can brace
Against everything base,
And the trace will be seen
All his life in his face—
That's a very fine thing he can do.

He can look to the Light
He can keep his thought white,
He can fight the great fight,
He can do with his might
What is good in God's sight—
Those are excellent things he can do.

Though his years be but few,
He can march in the queue
Of the Good and the Great,
Who battled with fate
And won through—
That's a wonderful thing he can do.

And—in each little thing
He can follow The King.
Yes—in each smallest thing
He can follow The King—
He can follow The Christ, The King.
John Oxenham.

XXXIII

THE BLACK HOLE

TOSEPH had by this time reached the age of seventeen. All was bright and rosy about him, when suddenly he was plunged into the deepest gloom. His brothers had gone to feed their flocks in the old pastures near Shechem. had been away for several weeks, and their father was growing anxious. So he called Joseph, and asked him to go to Shechem, and find out if they and the flocks were well. Gaily the young lad set out on his fifty miles' journey from Hebron. But when he reached Shechem, he could discover no trace of his brothers. As he wandered in the fields, he met a man who told him they had gone fifteen miles farther north to Dothan, where the pastures were fresher. With a light heart he followed them up to Dothan, and ran eagerly forward to meet them. But when his brothers caught sight of him, they scowled, and said, "Behold! this dreamer cometh." And they conspired together to slav him, and cast his dead body into one of the pits in the place, telling his father that a wild beast had devoured him. They would then see what would become of his dreams!

As the base men planned their deed of blood, Reuben, the eldest of the family, spoke out. He felt sorry for Joseph. He felt still more sorry for his father. He could not bear to bring this new grief upon him. So he proposed that they should not slay their brother, but cast him alive into the pit. Reuben intended later in the day to draw him out of the pit, and restore him to his father. But the rest of them meant to leave him alone to die. So when Joseph drew near, they fell upon him, tore the fine robe from his back, and cast him into the pit. Then they sat down to eat the bread he had brought them.

Joseph's life was saved. But it was little more than saved. The pit was a dark tank or cistern, cut in the ground, and used for storing water during the dry season. In shape it was like the bottle-dungeons into which prisoners used to be thrown. It was quite narrow at the neck, but broader near the bottom. There was no loophole anywhere. Thus a more desperate plight than Joseph's it would be hard to imagine. If he dashed against the walls of the pit, he would destroy himself, not them. Appeal to his brothers was equally in vain. Long afterwards they remembered how he had pleaded with them to spare him, and they would not hear. Only one little glint of light came to brighten the gloom. Through the open mouth of the pit he could still see the blue of heaven, and toward evening perhaps one or two of the stars of which he had dreamed. And he would feel in some sense that

[&]quot;Darkness in the pathway of man's life Is but the shadow of God's providence, By the great Sun of Wisdom cast thereon; And what is dark below is light in heaven."

THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

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Like Joseph, we sometimes find ourselves in holes from which there seems to be no escape. Yet there is always a gleam of light somewhere: the light of conscience within, the light of God's love overhead, the light of Christ's presence leading the way. Lincoln had his plans time and again blocked by his father's weakness, his partner's folly, and his enemies' determined opposition. But he kept true to the call of Duty, and so triumped over every difficulty. Garfield was kept by malarial fever from following out his early ambition of going to sea. But he was guided by his mother to the light of God in books, and thus led to embark on his great career as soldier and statesman. David Livingstone was prevented by the Opium War from giving his life to China as he intended. When at last he found his sphere in Africa, his station was burned, and he was driven into the unexplored north. On his great journeys he was often brought to the limit of his resources. But he still kept his eyes open to the light. "Shall I tell you," he said to the students of Glasgow University, "what sustained me amidst the toil and hardship and loneliness of my exiled life? It was the promise, I am with you always." However dark his path, Jesus was just in front. And pressing after Him, he was guided into God's clear light. So, if we follow the gleam, we shall be led in the way of light.

"O young Mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel,

And crowd your canvas, And, ere it vanishes Over the margin, After it, follow it, Follow the Gleam."

TENNYSON.

XXXIV

A FAITHFUL SERVANT

ELIVERANCE came to Joseph from an unexpected quarter. A caravan of Ishmaelite traders, on their way from Gilead to Egypt, happened to be passing through Dothan. Their camels were laden with spices of various kinds, but they were not unwilling to add a slave-boy to their other goods. So at Judah's suggestion Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. His brothers then killed a young goat, dipped his coat in the blood, took it home to their father, and said. "This have we found: see now whether it be thy son's coat or not." And Jacob recognized it, and said, "It is my son's coat; a wild beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces." And he rent his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for Joseph many days. And when his other sons rose up to comfort him, he refused to be comforted, saying, "I will go down to my son mourning even to the grave."

In the meantime Joseph had been carried to Egypt, and put up in the market, to be sold to the highest bidder. Soon he was bought by Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's body-guard, and sent to his house to work. It must have been humiliating

for a kingly spirit like Joseph to be handled, discussed, and bargained for, like a brute beast, and finally to be led off at his master's beck and call, to do the lowliest, most degrading tasks. I fear, if we had been in his position, most of us would have rebelled against both God and Potiphar. But Joseph had by this time learned to trace God's finger in all that befell him. So he set himself, with a stout, brave heart, to face his new lot, and to perform its duties faithfully. Often it must have been irksome and painful. His arms, used to so very different treatment, must have ached under their heavy load. His heart, too, must have been sore within him. Yet he toiled on manfully, seeking to do all as in God's sight,

and for His glory.

Once more things began to prosper in his hand. Cleanliness and order became the rule of the house. The furniture took on a new lustre. The dishes shone as they had never shone before. Work went smoothly and sweetly. Thus Joseph's heart began to expand again. His genial charm found a new outlet. His presence was like a ray of sunshine in the home. The result was inevitable. Light cannot be long hid under a bushel. Potiphar saw how all things prospered with Joseph. He felt, too, the grace of his character, and his influence over other men. So he promoted him step by step, until he made him steward of his whole estate. His faith in Joseph was complete. "He left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he troubled about nothing save the bread which he ate." His faith was fully justified. Never had he known a more capable, honest, and successful

steward than Joseph. From the moment when he placed him over his estate, "the Lord blessed the Egyptian for Joseph's sake, and the blessing of the Lord rested on all that he had, in the house and in the field."

Boys and young men are often so carried away by their ambition as to be "too big for their jobs." They feel themselves born to rule, so they will not serve. But the only way to rule is "to bear the yoke in one's youth." The young man of gifts must stoop to conquer, serve to command. As Lincoln said, "The true rule of life is to do one's level best, leaving the rest to take care of itself. The best preparation for the duties of to-morrow is the faithful performance of the duties of to-day." He was himself a perfect example of what he taught. As ploughman, rail-splitter, and surveyor, no less than President, his motto was Thorough. So he mounted the ladder, rung by rung, "from Log Cabin to White House."

We cannot have this lesson too strongly impressed on us. Ambition is good. Without ambition we shall make little of our lives. But ambition should never lift us above the present duty. Rather, it should spur us on to do our best in it. While we are still at school, then, let us work with all our heart. For what we learn at school is the foundation of all else. And when we pass out to the farm or office, shop or study, let us carry the shining principle with us: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." If we work in this spirit, our work will bring us increasing joy and success. It will satisfy our heart. It will strengthen our powers. It will lead us in the

way of advancement. It will give us influence over others. And it will command the approval of God. "Well done, good and faithful servant! Thou has been faithful in a few things: I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

XXXV

THE JUST MAN IN JAIL

JOSEPH had now to face the sharpest of all his trials. His master's wife was strongly drawn to him, and tried to win his love. But his high sense of honour made him proof against the temptation. In her anger she had him flung into jail. And there he languished for several years.

The jail into which Joseph was thrown was very different from ours. It was a vile dungeon, dark and damp, where crimnials of every kind were herded together in abject misery, their hands bound in fetters, and their feet held fast in the One would not have wondered had Joseph's faith at last yielded to the strain. But it only grew stronger as the iron cut into his flesh. He was marvellously buoyed up by the thought that he was innocent. He had the glad feeling, too, that God was with him in the prison, as He had been with him in the pit. Thus his face wore its old sunny look. And in due time his star began to rise again. As the keeper of the prison went his daily rounds, he could not but notice the young Hebrew's fresh and honest countenance. The more he saw of him, the better he liked him. So he began to show him favour. He struck off his fetters, and allowed him to wander freely through the prison. Then he gave him the oversight of

the prisoners. Finally he committed the whole place to his charge, looking to nothing that was under his hand, "because the Lord was with him,

and made that which he did to prosper."

Many a man would have used his freedom for his own ends. But Joseph's first concern was for others. Even while his feet were still "hurt with fetters," he had a smile and a kind word for those who lay suffering near him. Now that he was given the oversight of all the prisoners, he had many more chances of doing them good. There might be those among them who were innocent as he was. And he could lead them, as he had been led, to the Source of all comfort. There would, no doubt, also be hardened criminals who never in their lives had met with a friendly greeting. For them, too, he would have his word of hope and cheer. Or if their wounds were sore, he would tend and soothe them. For he had already learned the secret of true happiness, to which John Wesley gave expression:

> "Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can."

Joseph is thus the first of many prisoners for conscience' sake who have turned their dungeon into a house of God. Paul and Barnabas prayed and sang praises to God while their feet were in

the stocks. From his various prisons the Apostle sent out those letters which did so much to strengthen and build up the early Christian Churches. The house where he was shut up in Rome he found to be the very ante-room of heaven. So also Samuel Rutherford headed his letters in prison: "From Christ's Palace in Aberdeen." And he wrote to his friends: "Do you know I thought of Jesus till every stone in the

wall of my cell glowed like a ruby."

We have no longer to suffer as they did. We have perfect freedom of faith and speech. We can at all times defend ourselves against injustice. So it is only by accident that the innocent man is put in jail. Yet we may have to bear other forms of persecution, such as jests and jeers, contempt and hatred, dogged opposition, and even direct personal attacks. Every man who seeks to "force good causes forward" is exposed to treatment of this kind. To many sensitive minds it is even more irritating than imprisonment. But if God be with us, we shall keep our head high, and our heart calm and brave, through all of it. And we shall find like the brave old cavalier that

"Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage, Minds innocent and quiet take That for an heritage.

If I have freedom in my love, And in my soul am free, Angels alone, that soar above, Enjoy such liberty."

RICHARD LOVELACE.

XXXVI

DREAMS IN THE DUNGEON

DRISON has been the scene of many dazzling dreams. In prison St. Paul was caught up to the heavens, and saw a vision of things "which it is not possible for a man to utter." From his prison in the island of Patmos John saw his great Revelation of things to come. In Bedford jail John Bunyan dreamed his immortal dream, The Pilgrim's Progress. And in the fortress of Savona, midway between sea and sky, those two "symbols of the infinite," Mazzini dreamed of free united Young Italy.

We do not read of any dreams that Joseph had in the dungeon. But he acted as an interpreter of dreams to others. Some time after he had been given charge of the prisoners, there were handed over to him Pharaoh's chief butler and baker. They had offended their lord in some way, and were cast like Joseph into the prison. One morning he found them looking gloomy and depressed. They had each dreamed a dream, but could find no one to explain the meaning of it. So Joseph asked them to tell him the dreams, for "interpretations belong to God," and he was God's servant.

Thereupon the chief butler told him how he had seen in his dreams a vine budding and blossoming, then putting forth clusters of ripening grapes, which he took, and pressed into Pharaoh's cup, and gave Pharaoh to drink. And Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days; so within three days Pharaoh will lift up thine head, and restore thee to thine office: and thou shalt give Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler." Then in a few wistful words he pleaded with the butler to remember him in the hour of his own freedom, to make mention of him to Pharaoh, and so get him out of that place. "For," he said, "I was cruelly stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and here too I have done nothing for which they should have put me into this hole."

Encouraged by the interpretation Joseph had given of his friend's dream, the chief baker proceeded to tell his. As he dreamed, behold! there were three baskets of white bread on his head; and in the uppermost basket were "all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh." But the birds came down, and ate of the bakemeats in the basket. And Joseph answered and said, "This is the interpretation of it: the three baskets are three days; so in three days Pharaoh will lift up thine head, but he will then hang thee on a tree; and the birds will eat thy flesh from off thee."

It was as Joseph had said. The third day after that was Pharaoh's birthday, and Pharaoh made a great feast, to which he invited all his servants. Among the others he brought the chief butler and baker from prison to share in the feast. "And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again, and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand;

but he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them." And then pathetically the writer adds, "Yet did not the chief butler remem-

ber Joseph, but forgot him."

Ingratitude is one of the commonest of faults, and it is one of the cruelest. It pains the heart as few other sins do. And it strikes back upon the ungrateful heart itself, and makes it hard and cold, incapable of generous feeling, and closed against those deeds of kindness which sweeten life.

"Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou are not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou are not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot:
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remember'd not."

SHAKESPEARE.

XXXVII

FROM PRISON TO PALACE

FOR two more years Joseph lingered on in prison. These years must have been a time of bitter trial for him. Hope deferred made his heart sick. The ingratitude of the butler, too, drove the iron more deeply into his soul. Yet we can see how needful the delay was. Had Joseph been set at liberty when he wished, he would only have returned to menial service in some Egyptian house. But God meant to make him ruler of the land. And in the prison, as formerly in Potiphar's kitchen, He was quietly training him for that end. Little by little every touch of the "spoiled child" dropped from him. The iron entered his blood as well as his soul. He became strong, self-reliant, wise, patient, and sympathetic with others in their trouble. When at last he had proved his metal, God opened the way for his advancement both quickly and easily.

Pharaoh dreamed, and behold! he stood beside the river Nile. And behold! there came out of the river seven cattle, fat and beautiful, that fed in the reed grass by the water's edge. And behold! there came up after them seven other cattle, lean and ugly, that stood near them on the brink of the river. And behold! the lean, ugly cattle ate up the fat, beautiful ones. A second time, Pharaoh dreamed, and behold! seven ears of corn, rich and full, came up on one stalk. And behold! seven other ears, thin and blasted with the east wind, sprang up after them. And behold! the thin ears swallowed up the rich and full ones.

When Pharaoh awoke in the morning, his spirit was troubled because of the dreams. So he summoned all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. But there was no one among them that could interpret the dream. Then the conscience of the chief butler smote him, and he told Pharaoh of the young Hebrew slave who had interpreted his dreams in the prison. So Pharaoh sent for Joseph. And Joseph shaved himself, and changed his clothes, and went to Pharaoh. And Pharoah told him his dreams. And Joseph said to Pharaoh: "The dreams are one; and what God is about to do He hath revealed to Pharaoh. The seven good cattle and the seven good ears are seven years of plenty; and the seven lean cattle and the seven empty ears are seven years of famine. Behold! there are about to come seven years of great plenty over all the land of Egypt; but there shall rise up after them seven years of famine. And the famine shall consume the land, and the time of plenty shall be no more remembered in the land because of the famine that cometh after, for it shall be very severe. And the reason why the dream was doubled to Pharaoh is that the thing is made sure by God, and that He will shortly bring it to pass."

When Joseph had interpreted the dreams, he urged Pharaoh to look out for a man of wisdom

and intelligence to be governor of the land, and to appoint under him officers who should gather up the fifth part of the crops during the seven plenteous years, and store it as a provision against the seven years of famine. The advice was welcome to Pharaoh. And there was no one whom he found more competent to be governor than Joseph himself, "a man, in whom the spirit of God was." So he said to Joseph, "Seeing that God hath shown thee all this, there is none so intelligent and wise as thou art; therefore thou shalt be over my house, and to thy word shall all my people be obedient: only in respect of the throne will I be greater than thou." Then he took off his signet ring, and placed it on Joseph's hand. And he arrayed him in vestments of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck. And he made him ride in the second chariot of the land, and caused the fore-runners to cry, "Bow the knee!" And he gave him to wife Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, the most influential man in Egypt next to Pharaoh.

It was a hard test for a young man of thirty to be thus promoted at a bound to the highest position in the land. Too many of us would have had our heads turned by it. But Joseph remained the same dignified, courteous, kind-hearted gentleman he had been in the days of his obscurity. There was nothing servile in his attitude to Pharaoh, yet there was no trace of conceit. All through his interview he preserved that modesty which comes from a genuine faith in God. And when he entered upon his rule, he showed himself equally free from haughtiness and from self-

seeking. He believed that the Prime Minister was truly the "first servant" of the State. So he went about his work in all humility, trying to do his best for Pharaoh and his people, ever looking to God for the help he needed.

"We see him as he moved,
How modest, kindly, all-accomplish'd, wise,
With what sublime repression of himself,
And in what limits and how tenderly;
Not swaying to this faction or to that;
Not making his high place the lawless perch
Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage-ground
For pleasure; but thro' all this tract of years
Wearing the white flower of a blameless life,
Before a thousand peering littlenesses,
In that fierce light which beats upon a throne,
And blackens every blot."

TENNYSON.

XXXVIII

THE MONEY IN THE SACKS

THE seven years of plenty were full of happiness for Joseph. He was happy in his work, happy in his relations with Pharaoh, happy in his love for Asenath and their two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. Then came the seven anxious years of famine. All these years Joseph toiled heroically to save his people, and to build up a strong, just government in the land. And in the course of his duties he found himself once more in the bosom of his own family.

The famine had reached to Palestine, and Jacob and his sons saw their food melting away before their eyes. Then Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt. So he said to his sons, "Why stand ye looking one upon another? Behold! I have heard that there is corn in Egypt. Get you down thither, and buy for us thence, that we may live, and not die." And Jacob's sons went down to buy corn in Egypt. Only Benjamin, the youngest, remained at home with his father, who feared lest mischief might befall him, as it had befallen Joseph.

It must have been with a twinge of conscience that the ten men entered Egypt, the land to which they had sold their brother as a slave. But that

was twenty years ago, and they could hardly expect to meet him. At all events, they did not recognise in him the princely governor, to whom they "bowed themselves down with their faces to the earth." But Joseph knew them, and remembered the dreams which he had dreamed of them. Thus he learned how

"God gives the wishes of our youth, But in His own best way."

Joseph's heart warmed at once to his brothers. But he was not sure whether they had really repented of the past. So he "made himself strange unto them." and asked them roughly whence they came, and what business brought them to Egypt. They answered, "We have come from the land of Canaan to buy food." But Joseph pretended not to believe them, and said, "Ye are spies: to see the nakedness of the land ye are come." But they protested, and said to him, "Nay, my lord! but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies." Then he asked them whether their father was alive, and whether they had any more brothers. And they said, "We thy servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold! the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not." Joseph was now all eagerness to see Benjamin. So he said, "Ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and the rest of you shall be bound, that your words may be proved, and it

be seen whether there be truth in you: or else—by the life of Pharaoh!—surely ye are spies." And he left them three days under guard to discuss the matter.

On the third day Joseph called his brothers, and said to them, "This do, and live! for I am a God-fearing man. If ye be true men, let one of you be bound, in the guard-house, where ye have lain, and the rest of you go, take with you corn for the famine in your homes, and bring your youngest brother to me; so shall the truth of your words be shown, and ye shall not die." When they heard these words, they said one to another, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." And Reuben brought a fresh sting to their sorrow when he added, "Spake I not unto you, saying, 'Do not sin against the lad!' and ye would not hear? therefore also, behold! his blood is required of you."

The brothers did not know that Joseph understood their private talk. For as governor of Egypt he had been speaking to them through an interpreter. But he was so deeply touched that he withdrew to another room and wept. Then he washed his face, and returned to them. Having learned how Reuben had sought to save him from harm, he took Simeon, the next oldest, and bound him before his brothers' eyes. Then he commanded his servants to fill their sacks with corn, and to put each one's money into his sack, to give them also provision for the journey, and to speed them on their way. "And thus was it

done unto them." So the ten men laded their asses with their corn, and departed thence.

How like the goodness of our God! Though we have sinned against Him, He pours out His benefits upon us. He sends the sunshine and the showers, He gives us "sweet flowers and fruits," ripening harvests, and all the other joys of earth. He plants us in happy homes, and surrounds us with love and friendship. He sent His own Son to die for us. He fills us with the "sevenfold graces" of His Spirit. And all without money and without price!

"Ho, then! everyone that thirsteth, come to the waters,
And he that hath no bread, eat!
Yea, come! buy corn without money,
And wine and milk without price!

Why spend ye money for what is not bread, And your earnings for what will not satisfy? Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself with fatness!

Incline your ear, and come unto me;
Hear, and your soul shall live!
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
Even the sure mercies I promised to David."

Isaiah iv:1-3.

XXXXX

IN BOND FOR A BROTHER

THE guilty conscience is afraid even of gifts So, when the ten sons of Jacob found their money in the mouth of their sacks, their hearts failed them for fear, and they turned trembling one to another, saying, "What is this that God hath now done to us?" In due time, however they returned to their father, and told him al that had happened to them in Egypt. And Jacob said, "Me have ye bereaved of my children. Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; and ye would take Benjamin away also! All these things are against me." Then Reuben spake to his father saying, "Hand him over to my care, and I will surely bring him back to thee. Slay my two sons if I bring him not back to thee!" But Jacob refused, saying, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone If mischief befall him on the way by which ye have to go, ye shall bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

The famine still lay heavy on the land. Soon Jacob and his sons had eaten up all the corn they brought from Egypt. Then Jacob said to them, "Go again, buy us a little food." But Judah answered him, saying, "The man did solemnly protest to us, saying, 'Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you."

So, if thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food; but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down." And Jacob said, "Why dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man that ye had another brother?" And the brothers answered with one accord, saying, "The man asked plainly about ourselves, and about our family, saving, 'Is your father yet alive? Have ye still another brother?' And we answered his questions honestly. How could we by any means know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down!' '' Judah further offered to be surety for the boy. So Jacob said, "Well! if it must be so, do this: Take of the choicest fruits of the land. and carry them in your sacks as a present to the man; and take double money in your hands, together with the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks, for perhaps that was an oversight! take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man; and God Almighty give you mercy in the eyes of the man, that he may send you back your other brother-and Benjamin! And if I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

Then Judah and his brothers took the present, and the double money in their hands, and Benjamin; and they went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph. When he saw Benjamin with them, he bade his steward take them to his own house, and make ready a banquet, for he would dine with them at noon. But they feared he was only seeking an occasion to fall upon them, and make them slaves, because of the money that was returned to their sacks. So they approached the

steward, and told him that they had brought back the money, and that they knew not who put it in their sacks. But he said, "Peace be with you! fear not! Your God, and the God of your fathers, gave you the treasure in your sacks. Your money came to me." And he took them to Joseph's house, and brought Simeon to them. And he gave them water to wash their feet, and food for their asses. Then he went to make ready

the banquet.

When Joseph came home at noon, they laid out their present, and once more "bowed themselves down to the earth before him." But this time he received them graciously, and asked how they were, and how their father was. Then he cast his eyes on Benjamin, his own mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom ye spake to me?" And he blessed him, and said, "God be gracious to thee, my son!" At these words his feelings overcame him, and he hastened to his own room, and wept there. Then he washed his face, and returned, and gave orders to serve the dinner. And his servants set places for Joseph and his Egyptian attendants, and his brothers, each by themselves. For the Egyptians would not eat at the same table as the Hebrews. Much to their amazement, the brothers were seated according to age. And messes were brought them from Joseph's own table, Benjamin's mess being five times as much as any of the others. So they ate and drank, and were merry with him.

When the dinner was over, Joseph instructed his steward to fill the men's sacks with food, "as much as they could carry," and again to put every man's money in the mouth of his sack. To test their lovalty to Benjamin, he bade him further put his own silver cup in the mouth of Benjamin's sack. "And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken." Next morning, at daybreak, the men laded their asses, and set out on their journey. But when they were only a little way from the city, Joseph bade his steward follow them, and charge them with having stolen the The men indignantly denied the charge. "Behold! the money which we found in our sacks' mouth we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?" If he still suspected them, let him look through their sacks! And let the man in whose sack the cup should be found be put to death, while the rest of them were ready to be made slaves. The steward accepted the challenge, though he modified the terms. "Let it be then according to your words! He with whom the cup shall be found shall be my slave; but the rest of you shall be blameless." Then they hastily brought down their sacks to the ground, and opened them. And the steward searched them, beginning with the eldest, and leaving off with the voungest. "And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack."

Had the brothers been the men they formerly were, they would have left Benjamin to his fate. They would even have been glad to get rid of one who was now their father's favourite. But their hearts were changed, and they resolved as one man to stand by Benjamin to the end. So "they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city." When they came to Joseph's house, "they fell before him on the ground." Joseph asked them sharply, "What sort of deed is this that ye have done? And did ye not know that a man like me can surely divine hidden things?" They answered, "What shall we say unto my lord? And how can we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants. Behold! we are my lord's bondmen, both we, and he in whose hand the cup hath been found." But Joseph said, "God forbid that I should do so! The man in whose hand the cup hath been found, he shall be my bondman; but as for you, get you up in peace to your father."

Then Judah drew near, and said to Joseph: "O my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant! for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saving, 'Have ye a father, or a brother?' And we said unto my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.' And thou saidst unto thy servants, 'Bring him down unto me; that I may set mine eyes upon him.' And we said unto my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die.' And thou saidst unto thy servants, 'Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.'

"And it came to pass, when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, 'Go again, buy us a little food!' And we said, 'We cannot go down only if our youngest brother be with us, will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us.' And thy servant my father said unto us, 'Ye know that my wife bare me two sons: and the one went out from me, and I said, 'Surely he is torn in pieces'; and I have not seen him since; and if you take this one also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.' Now, therefore, if I go home to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us-his soul being knit with the lad's soul-when he seeth that the lad is not with us, he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the grey hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. Moreover, thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, 'If I bring him not back to thee, then shall I bear the blame to my father for ever.' Now, therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, remain here instead of the lad as a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren! For how can I go up to my father—and the lad be not with me—and look on the evil that shall fall on my father?"

Truly, a noble plea! One that carries us over the years to the pleader's great Son, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," who put Himself in bond for His brethren, and "ever liveth to make intercession for them." It is hard to realise that this is the same Judah who gave the advice to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver!

But

150 THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

"I hold it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."
TENNYSON.

XL

A ROYAL FORGIVENESS

JOSEPH was deeply moved as he listened to Judah's words. At last he could no longer restrain himself. So he gave orders that all his attendants should leave the room. Then he broke into loud weeping. And, as he wept, he cried out,

"I am Joseph! Is my father yet alive?"

His brothers were so confused by the disclosure that they could not utter a word. Therefore he bade them come near to him, and said, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. But now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me hither; for God sent me before you to save life. For these two years hath the famine been in the midst of the land; and there are still five years in which there shall be neither ploughing nor harvest. So God did send me before you to save you with a great salvation. And He hath made me father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Therefore, haste ye, and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus sair a thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down to me, tarry not: and thou shalt live near me, and I will nourish thee—for there are yet five years of famine—lest thou come to poverty, thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast.""

The brothers were still so confused that they could scarcely believe what they heard. So Joseph went on to say, "Behold! your eyes do see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaketh to you. Therefore ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all else that ye have seen. And ye shall make haste to bring down my father hither." Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. After that he kissed all his brothers in turn, and wept upon them. Then they talked to one another of all that was in their heart.

It was a royal forgiveness, full and free, as God's forgiveness is. So ought we also to forgive, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

"In the course of justice, none of us Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy; And that same prayer doth teach us all to render The deeds of mercy."

SHAKESPEARE.

XLI

A UNITED HOME

THE news that Joseph's brothers were with him soon spread through all the palace, and Pharaoh and his servants came to share in their joy. Pharaoh courteously renewed the invitation that Joseph had given them, and bade them take wagons from Egypt to bring up their father, their wives, and their little ones. Joseph then loaded them with gifts of fine clothes, money and food, sent them home to their father, and said to them, "See that ye don't excite yourselves on the way."

When they reached home they told their father that Joseph was yet alive, and that he was ruler over all the land of Egypt. But the news seemed too good to be true, and he refused to believe till he saw the wagons at the door. Then his spirit revived, and he said: "It is enough! Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I

die."

So Jacob set out with all that he had, and came first to Beersheba, the home of his father Isaac. There he offered sacrifices to the God of Isaac; and God appeared to him in a dream by night, and cheered him with promises of good. From Beersheba he went on to Egypt, sending Judah before him to announce his arrival to Joseph. When

Joseph heard of his coming, he yoked his chariot, and went to meet him in Goshen, on the north-east border of Egypt. And when he came in sight of him, he ran and fell on his neck, and wept there a long while. And Jacob said to him, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, and found that

thou art yet alive!"

Joseph wished his father and brothers to be settled in Goshen, where the pastures were rich and good. So he advised them, when they met Pharaoh, to tell him that they were keepers of cattle. Then he went back to Pharaoh, taking with him five of his brothers. Pharaoh asked them about their occupation, and they told him they were herdsmen. They further begged that he would allow them to dwell in Goshen. And Pharaoh requested Joseph to choose the very best portion of land in Goshen for them to dwell in. And he added, "If thou findest some able men among them, make them overseers of my own herds."

Then Joseph brought his father Jacob, and presented him to Pharaoh. And Pharaoh greeted him, and asked him his age. The old man answered, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have been the days of the years of my life; and they have not reached the days of the years of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." And he blessed Pharaoh, and went out from his presence.

After that Joseph gave his father and brothers a tract of land in the district of Rameses, the best portion of Goshen. And Joseph supported them and their households with food. And they lived

happily together for seventeen years.

It is now seldom that scattered families are united as Jacob's was. We may meet, perhaps, at a wedding, or on a holiday. Yet it is only for a short time. And even so there is usually at least one vacant chair. But, thank God! there is a Home where the blanks are filling up, and the broken ties made fast.

"In the vale of youth and flowers
We shall meet each dear-loved face,
And all partings shall be ended
In a long and true embrace."

A. C. FRYOR.

XLII

A HAPPY ENDING

THE time drew near when Jacob must die. So he called his son Joseph, and made him swear an oath thatshe would bury him beside his fathers in the cave of Machpelah. And Joseph swore the oath. Soon afterwards Jacob fell very sick, and Joseph took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and went to see him. When Jacob heard that Joseph had come, he pulled himself together, sat upon his bed, and talked to him of past blessings and sorrows, especially of the grief that Rachel's death had caused him. Then he lifted up his eyes, now dim with age, and faintly perceived the two figures by Joseph's side. He asked who these were. And Joseph answered him, "They are my sons, whom God hath given me here." Then Jacob said, "Bring them to me, I pray thee, that I may bless them!" And Joseph brought them near to him. And Jacob said to Joseph, "I had not hoped to see thy face: and behold! God hath let me see thy seed also."

Now Joseph had placed Manasseh, the elder son, on his left hand toward Jacob's right, and Ephraim, the younger, on his right hand toward Jacob's left. But the dying man crossed his hands, and laid the right one on Ephraim's head, and the left on Manasseh's. And he blessed them,

and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God that hath shepherded me all my life long unto this day, the Angel that hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads! And let them inherit my name, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac! And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth!"

Joseph was displeased that his father had laid his right hand on Ephraim; and he held it up, to lay it on Manasseh, saying, "Not so, my father! for this is the first born; put thy right hand on his head!" But his father refused, saying, "I know, my son, I know! He also shall become a people, he also shall be great; howbeit his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations." And he blessed them further, saying, "By your names shall the people of Israel bless one another, saying, 'God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh!'"

Then Jacob called his other sons together, and blessed them, and charged them to join with Joseph in burying him beside his fathers. "And when Jacob had made an end of charging his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed, and died." And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept over him, and kissed him. Then he gave orders to the embalmers to embalm him. And he and the Egyptians mourned him for seventy days.

When the time of mourning was over, he asked permission of Pharaoh to go up to Palestine and bury his father there. And Pharaoh granted him permission. So he went up to Palestine, he and his brothers, with the servants in Pharaoh's house and all the chief men of Egypt, "a very great company," attended by chariots and horsemen. And they mourned for Jacob seven days on the threshing-floor of Atad, just over the border of Palestine. And they buried him in the cave of

Machpelah, and returned to Egypt.

Now that Jacob was dead, the ten brothers feared lest Joseph might pay them back for the evil they had done him. So they sent a message to him, saying, "Thy father commanded us before he died, saying, 'Thus shall ve say to Joseph: I pray thee, forgive the great wrong, and the sin, which thy brothers did to thee'; so now, we pray thee forgive the wrong-doing of the servants of thy father's God." They went in person also, and fell down before his face, and said, "Behold! we are thy servants." Joseph was grieved that they doubted his good will. So he went, and said to them, "Fear not! for am I in the place of God? As for you, no doubt ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass what ye see this day, the saving of the lives of much people. Now, therefore, fear not! for I will nourish both yourselves and your little ones." And he comforted them, and spoke kindly to them.

Joseph and his brothers lived many more years in Egypt, and saw children and grandchildren to the third generation. At last, when Joseph was an hundred and ten years old, the time came for him also to die. So he called together his brothers, and said to them, "I am now about to die; but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." And he

made them take an oath that, when God did bring them to Palestine, they would carry his bones with them, and lay them to rest on holy ground. Then he passed away, like the summer sun, in beauty and peace.

"Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea;
But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;
For the from out the bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far.

I hope to see my Pilot face to face,
When I have crost the bar."

TENNYSON.







